

Intercultural Dialogue Institute

Dear friends of IDI;

We live in a world of ever-increasing interdependence between nations, but of growing enmity between cultures, religions and social groups. A lack of knowledge about other traditions and beliefs can be a catalyst for antagonism between individuals and groups when forced to live in close proximity. The same can be true on a global level, when groups' only exposure to each other is the media. At both global and local levels, the widening divide between Western and Eastern civilizations requires urgent attention.

On one hand, exposure to different cultures and faiths will build mutual understanding between groups and individuals and contribute to peaceful interdependence. On the other hand, cultural and religious understanding cannot be perpetuated through an international charter or political summit. It must be generated among individuals in and between their neighbourhoods, religious communities, and workplaces. To achieve this goal, we are pursuing intercultural and interfaith initiatives to encourage and support local authorities and community groups in managing their religious and cultural diversity to bring benefit rather than conflict.

IDI's main purpose is to forge bounds of lasting friendship among diverse Canadians by identifying what is that we have in common, by learning to appreciate and honour differences, and by collaborating on mutually led beneficial projects.

As the Intercultural Dialogue Institute, we are here to say as Haci Bektas would have said;

Let's unite our souls
Make our job easier
Love each other
Because no one will get to keep this

We hope to see you with us on this journey to build a brighter and sustainable future for our new generations.

Ahmet Tamirci

National Director

Intercultural Dialogue Institute

About IDI

Intercultural Dialogue Institute (IDI) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to advance social cohesion through personal interaction by promoting respect and mutual understanding among people of all cultures and faiths through dialogue and partnership. The Institute aims to eliminate or reduce false stereotypes, prejudices and unjustified fears through direct personal interactions. IDI carries out its mission by connecting communities, empowering engagement and inspiring new ideas.

IDI was founded by Turkish Canadians inspired by the teachings and example of Fethullah Gulen. The Institute is a civil organization, rather than a religious or ethnic organization. IDI aims to facilitate dialogue on a whole range of social issues, independent of any particular faith or religion. It stands for democracy, human rights, the non-instrumentalization of religion in politics, equality and freedom of speech.

To achieve its purpose IDI organizes social, educational and cultural activities such as lectures, seminars, conferences, discussion forums, luncheons, informative dinners, programs for students and youth, intercultural exchange trips, courses, and outreach programs.

Headquartered in Toronto, IDI has 10 regional chapters throughout Canada.

Our Principles

- We seek and welcome the gift of diversity.
- We value constant positive action based on universal values such as integrity, love, respect and equality, which are crucial for healthy dialogue.
- We are committed to universal values of democracy and human rights.
- We respect the uniqueness of each religion, and differences of practice or belief.
- We make efforts to provide space, opportunity and inclusivity for all stakeholders.
- We have no one particular agenda and no inherent ideology, other than a genuine concern for the quality and welfare of all life.
- Our members are free to disagree on matters of belief, but join together to act in a common spirit of friendship and mutual respect.



Editor: Jackie Kovacs

About the Hizmet Movement

The Hizmet (service in Turkish) Movement is a worldwide civic initiative and volunteer service network rooted in the spiritual and humanistic tradition of Islam and inspired by the ideas and activism of Muslim scholar Fethullah Gülen.

Hizmet is a faith-inspired, non-political, non-governmental, cultural and educational movement whose basic principles stem from Islam's values of love for creation, sympathy and compassion for all of humanity, charity, and self-sacrifice. Whether through education, relief aid, or community-building programming, Hizmet has dedicated itself to the project of social development while emphasizing the integrity of individual agency in bringing about positive social change.

The movement originated in Turkey, but now enriches more than a hundred and fifty countries around the world. While operating out of religious convictions, the movement has no interest in promoting the practice of Islam nor is it seeking to reform the Islamic tradition. It is instead a community of individuals committed to authentically live the mission and values already embedded within the tradition that was given to them.

The movement is noted for its support of democracy, its openness to the cross currents of globalization, its progressive attitude towards synthesizing tradition with modernity, and its holistic approach to community building.

Hizmet's work is most visible through an array of service projects initiated, funded, and implemented by the movement's millions of committed volunteer participants, women and men, young and old, from diverse segments of civil society (students, academics, business owners, professionals, public officials, and farmers). Projects include tutoring centers, schools, colleges, hospitals, publishing houses and media outlets. In addition, the Hizmet movement operates a major relief organization named Kimse Yok Mu (KYM).

The movement generates its financial support through the revivification of the traditional Islamic concepts of community that stress the importance of individual giving and hospitality. Research suggests that the average financial contribution of participants makes up 5 to 10 percent of the donors annual income.

Known for his simple lifestyle, Fethullah Gülen, affectionately called Hodjaefendi, is a Muslim scholar and contemplative poet. He was born in Erzurum, eastern Turkey, in 1941. Upon graduation from a private divinity school in Erzurum, he obtained his license and began to preach and teach about the importance of understanding and tolerance. His social reform efforts have made him one of Turkey's most well-known and respected public figures. He denounces any attribution of leadership and instead spends most of his time reading, writing, and in worship. Fethullah Gülen currently resides in Pennsylvania and continues to write and give talks on various important subjects related to spirituality and humanitarian service and causes.

10th Anniversary of IDI GTA's Annual Dialogue and Friendship Dinner

The 10th annual Dialogue and Friendship dinner was held on January 22, 2015 at Toronto's Royal York Fairmont Hotel. It celebrated ten years of interesting and relevant conversation into the social issues communities face.

Continuing its tradition of bringing community and city leaders together, the event welcomed myriad distinguished guests. These included, Senator Don Meredith, Hon. Reza Moridi, Ontario Minister of Training, Universities and Colleges, MP Mike Sullivan, Hon. Tracey MacCharles, Ontario Minister of Children and Youth Services, Hon. David C. Onley, Former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, MPP Shafiq Qaadr.

Dr. Meric Gertler's Keynote Address

The a keynote address was given by Dr. Meric Gertler, President of the University of Toronto and expert Urban Economist. His address was entitled "*University and City-Region: a Partnership for Innovation and Opportunity*".

Dr. Gertler began by describing the relationship between universities and their host cities as inherently symbiotic. For him the university is more than a place of education, it is a city builder that has far reaching benefits for the cities in which it is located.

Universities, he went on to explain help to stabilize the local economy, not only through new graduates, but through the sheer number that large institutions like the University of Toronto employ. They connect their host cities to the rest of the world through collaborative research and publishing with academics around the world and entice people to host cities, furthering a region's economy.

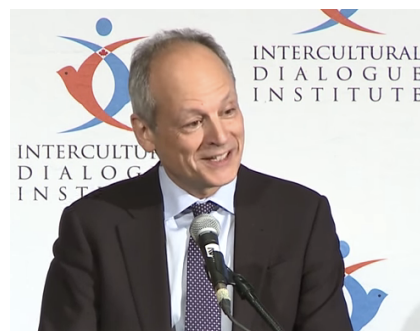
While universities face challenges in our fast changing world they are still a vital part of communities beyond simple education. As city builders and community participants they help reinvent cities.

Dr. Gertler cited Toronto as an example where the atmosphere of Toronto attracted immigrants from all over the world, which in turn let the city through many changes. With the influence of education and immigration Toronto saw a transformation from

textiles and manufacturing to farming to finance and film.

Today, Toronto has the third largest financial services in North America and is arguable within the top ten life

sciences sector in the world. For him this is due in no small part to the role of community building universities and the vibrant immigrant life which work off each other for a healthy university-city symbiosis.



IDI GTA's Excellence in Community Service and Young Leaders Awards

Annually, individuals and organizations are recognized for their outstanding efforts and commitment to their community. This year the community leaders recognized were:

- **Honorary David C. Onley**, Former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario
- **Pathways to Education**, accepted on behalf by Chair Samuel Duboc
- **Mustafa Ahmed**, poet
- **Danny Richmond**, Inspirit Foundation

Mayor of Pickering, presented the Excellence in Community Service award to Hon. David C. Onley, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, who has been a champion for disability issues and Chair of the Accessibility Standards and Advisory board. Hon. Onley thanked IDI and what it stands for in a world he described as being in desperate need of reconciliation. Senator Don Meredith introduced Pathways to Education's work and praised its numerous successes. He described the importance of their work of helping youth in low income neighbourhoods achieve high school graduation and transition

DIALOGUE AND FRIENDSHIP DINNER

to post-secondary education. Pathways provides community based academic, financial, and social support for these young Canadians across the country. They have seen a reduction of high school dropout rates of up to 70% and post-secondary admission increase of 300%.

Samuel Duboc, Chair of Pathways to education accepted the award on behalf of the group and the 4500 people employees and volunteers. He thanked the IDI and all people working toward the goal of creating a better life in this country regardless of where one comes from, that with better awareness that the differences among us make us the best.

The Emerging Young Leaders awards were presented to two inspiring young people. Mustafa Ahmed, 18, has seen many and varied accomplishments uses his spoken word to improve community relations. He continued the theme of differences among us, believing that we

start to see change when we embrace those differences.

Danny Richmond, of the Inspirit Foundation, has been active in social and cultural issues since he was young. He works to foster an atmosphere in Canada that thrives on diversity, rather than passive acceptance of it; creating more opportunity for engagement and a future that needs youth who embrace this.

Shafic Qadri, MPP of Etobicoke-North concluded the evening with thanks and congratulations.

For photos and videos, <http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/10th-annual-dialogue-and-friendship-dinner/>



Upcoming Events and Projects

Conference on International Law and Domestic Policies

The aim of this International Conference is to evaluate the impact of international law within domestic legal orders in different national contexts. 30-31 October 2015

<http://www.interculturaldialog.com/conference-international-law-domestic-policies/>

Iftar Dinners

Every year IDI GTA hosts a series of “Community Iftar (fast-breaking) Dinners” during the month of Ramadan. Iftar dinners bring together people of various faith and ethno-cultural backgrounds and serve as a means of fostering dialogue and cross-cultural awareness. <http://www.ramadandinners.ca/>

Meet Your Neighbour

“Meet Your Neighbour” is a program where families affiliated with IDI invite guests to their homes to have dinner together. In these programs, families meet, greet, and create a joyful family atmosphere. Families also maintain good relations with their neighbours, regardless of what their religion, beliefs, culture, or race may be.

Register here: <http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/upload/MeetYourNeighbour/index.html>

Intercultural Study Tours

All branches of IDI have been organizing several intercultural trips to Turkey every year, mostly during the summer months. These sponsored study tours are designed and organized to strengthen the existing relations with tour participants and build bridges between communities, organizations and cultures.

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/activities/trip-to-turkey/>

#MySauga Youth Video Contest

If you are between the ages of 12 and 30 you are eligible to enter the #MySauga Youth Video Contest. Simply create a 3 to 6 minute video that explores the question ‘How do you experience your city through culture?’ and submit your entry online. It’s a great opportunity for you to show your pride of Mississauga and for the chance to win great prizes. Contest extended to Saturday, October 31, 2015. <http://www.mysaugavideo.ca/>

IDI Fellowship Project

Intercultural Dialogue Institute(IDI) is inviting MA/PhD candidates and those who have recently completed their MA or PhD in social sciences for a study fellowship that incorporates a trip to Turkey with the mission of exploring social, economic, cultural, security and political issues in Turkey and the wider region.

<http://www.interculturaldialog.com/events/idi-fellowship-project/>

More Than One Story

Developed by the Department of Culture and Leisure of city of Simirshamn in Sweden, More Than One Story is a unique and powerful bilingual card game which builds bridges between people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/more-than-one-story-an-award-winning-game-that-builds-bridges/>

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S RECEPTION



Reception for **Art & Essay Contest Finalists**

Lieutenant Governor David C. Onley generously hosted a reception for the finalists of IDI's Art & Essay Contest on Thursday, July 10th, 2014 at the Lieutenant Governor's Suite in Queen's Park. Parents and teachers of the finalists also attended the occasion, where Chris Leahy, chair of Durham Catholic District School Board, offered a thank-you speech on behalf of participating school boards.

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/lieutenant-governors-reception-for-art-essay-contest-participants/>



2015 Art and Essay Contests



Art & Essay Contest

Peel and Durham Region

The finalist posters and essays of Peel Art and Essay Contest 2014 were recognized during the contest's awards ceremony on February 18th, 2015 at the Mississauga Convention Centre. With its theme "Volunteers – Heroes among Us", the contest was dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of Peel Region which was celebrated in 2014. The Durham Art and Essay Contest awards were held on May 20th, 2015.

The contests aimed to motivate students to reflect on topics around volunteerism, e.g. altruism, civic engagement, community service and responsible citizenship. A number of organizations in Peel region and Durham region supported and contributed to these events..

Peel Art and Essay Contest is an annual collaborative venture of Intercultural Dialogue Institute GTA, Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. Its Durham counterpart is in collaboration with Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Durham District School Board, Durham Catholic District School Board, and Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board.

The contest provides youth with a unique opportunity to express their ideas on topics through writing and art. It is expected to make a positive impact in preparing youth to be empathetic and responsible citizens of their communities and the globe.

Around 150 attendees including finalists, their family members and teachers, school board representatives and many distinguished leaders of Peel and Durham Regions attended the ceremony. The event was a great excitement for the students and their families as the winners were not known beforehand.

The top three students in each category (art and essay) received laptops (1st place), tablets (2nd place), Wacom Bamboo (3rd place art) and Kindle tablets (3rd place essay) from the organizers of the contest. All finalists received special certificates presented by Jagmeet Singh. Frank Dale, Chair of Peel Region and Janet McDougald, Chair of Peel District School Board offered opening remarks whereas Shelley White, President and CEO of the United Way of Peel Region made the keynote speech of the evening.

The IDI GTA team extends its heartfelt congratulations to all finalists and its sincere gratitude to all individuals and organizations that supported the contest in different ways.

For more photos, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/awards-ceremony-of-the-2nd-peel-art-and-essay-contest/> (Peel Region)

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/durham-region-art-essay-contest-awards-ceremony-may-20-2015/> (Durham Region)

Interfaith Symposium and Concert

Interfaith

Symposium and Concert

Dedicated to International Peace Day 2014, the Interfaith Symposium and Concert was held at the Metropolitan United Church on September 21, 2014.

The first panel was “Sources of Religious Conflict in the Middle Ages,” discussed by the following speakers: Professor Mark Myerson, University of Toronto; Professor Zeki Saritoprak, John Carroll University; and Professor Darren Dias of St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto.

“Discourse on Peace in the Middle Ages: Moses Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas, and Jalaladdin Rumi,” was the second panel. Its panelist were: Rabbi Dow Marmur, Rabbi Emeritus at Holy Blossom Temple; Professor John Dadosky of the Regis College, University of Toronto; and Professor Liyakat Takim, McMaster University. Guests then enjoyed supper and an address by guest speaker Archbishop Colin R. Johnson, Anglican Church of Canada. They were then treated to the concert with performances by: Holy



Blossom Temple Lachan Choir, Jewish; Metropolitan United Church Choir, Christian; and Jerrahi Sufi Assembly, Muslim (with Whirling Dervishes).

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/interfaith-symposium-concert-sep-21-reflections-of-peace-from-rumi-maimonides-aquinas/>



2015 Public Heroes Media Launch & Youth Recognition



Media Launch And Youth Recognition

The York Regional Police hosted the media launch and the youth recognition event on January 12th, 2015 at their Headquarters in Aurora, Ontario. In conjunction to the recognition event was the launch of the annual Public Heroes awards nomination process. The event was organized by the IDI GTA, and held with representations from police, fire and paramedic services across the GTA including the RCMP.

Recognized by the Toronto Police was Lovejeet Bhatti as a successful alumnus of Toronto Police Youth in Policing Initiative. A resident of Newmarket, Cody Kaslove received the recognition upon recommendation from York Regional Police for his accomplishments as co-op placement student at the York Regional Police Community Safety Village. Chris Thind, nominated by Toronto Paramedics, was recognized for his outstanding achievements as a member of 1st Downsview Medical Venturer Company.

Also Included in yesterday's ceremony was a special award of bravery that was presented to six year-old, Arjunpal Khattri, from Markham who on November 9, 2014, demonstrated bravery in getting help for his father who had fallen and was trapped in a 25 foot deep well.

Public Heroes Awards are given to GTA area Police, Fire and Paramedic services staff based on three criteria: "Altruism", "Dedication" and "Community Involvement". Members of these services and the public were encouraged to nominate their friends, peers, and relatives for these prestigious awards through the Public Heroes website.

For more photos and videos from this event please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/public-heroes-awards-gta-2015-media-launch-jan-12/>

2015 Public Heroes GTA Awards



Co-Hosted by IDI GTA and the Town of Richmond Hill, the 2015 Public Heroes Awards GTA were held on April 9th, at the Oak Ridges Community Centre. The charity sponsor of the event was Tema Conter Memorial Trust, which is active in the study and education of post-traumatic stress disorder. The opening remarks of the evening were given by Mayor Dave Barrow. Chief Bill Blair was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award, for which he joked “lifetime achievement *so far*.” In his acceptance, he acknowledged the Toronto Police Service and the community safety and service people who helped in ensuring the safety of communities along with the first responders. Chief Blair also thanked the IDI and acknowledged the work that they have done together over the past ten years. He spoke to the accomplishments of the city of Toronto and the surrounding GTA for creating an atmosphere that was welcoming and respectful, not just tolerant of each other’s cultures. He thanked the IDI for working toward fostering intercultural dialogue and

regarded Toronto’s safety record as an accomplishment of our communities.

Rob Clarke Keynote Address

Rob Clarke, is the Member of Parliament for Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, representing northern Saskatchewan. An 18 year veteran of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Rob has extensive policing experience pertaining to First Nation communities. He has had 8 postings in his career, where he served in the communities of Indian Head, Sandy Lake First Nation, Red Earth First Nation, Onion Lake First Nation, Rosthern, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Spiritwood and Warman, all of which are located in Saskatchewan.

Rob has received recognition for his policing career, including the Saskatchewan Council of Senior Federal Officials Volunteer of the Year Award in 2001, the Commanding Officer’s Certificate of Appreciation Award, the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Commendation



Mina Rahravan
York Regional Police



Chief Bill Blair
Lifetime achievement award



Derek McDonald
RCMP 'O' Division



Crispin Barnes
Toronto Police Service



Sarah Salvis
Peel R. Paramedic Ser.



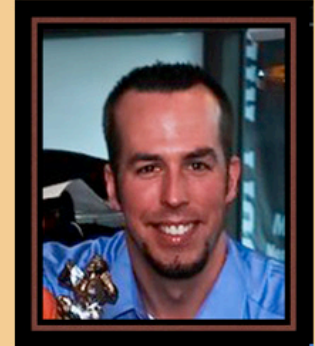
Shaun Carter
Durham Regional Police



Mandip Bhamber
Peel Regional Police



Chris McPhee
Toronto Paramedic Ser.



Jeff McGrath
York Region EMS

Medal and the RCMP Commissioners Commendation for Bravery during the 2006 shootings in Spiritwood, SK. In March 2008, Rob was elected in a by-election for Desnethé-Mississippi-Churchill River.

In his address, he spoke on how there was nothing more invigorating than being thanked by someone that he had helped and it was for this reason that first responders were dedicated to their work, they want to help people. While it can be dangerous, it would also be the most rewarding pursuit, he said while explaining that he still has PTSD from the 2006 shooting. Following this, he thanked the Tema Center Memorial Trust for their work with PTSD.

Speaking further on the topic of tolerance and multiculturalism, Rob Clarke brought up the Indian Act which became policy in 1876 and has not seen major changes or abolishment since. He explained how South Africans had come over in the 1920s and used it as a model for Apartheid. He has sponsored a private member's bill to address this, stating that its abolishment will create harmony and bring Canadian society closer together. It was time to acknowledge mistakes and ignoring negative cultural incidents as anomalous would not help, but they would have to be confronted and overcome.

For the full set of videos and photos from the event, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/public-heroes-gta-2015-awards-ceremony-dinner-april-9th/>

Women's Day



March 12

Women's Day

The IDI GTA celebrated Women's Day with an Ideologue Luncheon, "Trailblazers." The event was co-organized with St. Michael's College and sponsored by ADA Chocolate.

The Master of Ceremonies was Sevaun Palvetzian, CEO of Civic Action and the Excellence in Community Service Award went to Women of Influence, which was accepted by its President and CEO Carolyn Lawrence.

Anne-Marie Mediwake, News Anchor for CBC Toronto delivered the keynote address. She began by thanking the grandmothers in the room, whom she regards as trailblazers themselves. She spoke on her experience as a child of immigrant parents, and dealing with ignorance of others.

When she was choosing her post-secondary path, she decided on Journalism as the fit for her, advising us to "find our fit." She explained that goal setting and having a mission statement—which consisted of 'who do I want to be?', rather than 'what do I want to be?'—were two of her important practices for keeping on a trailblazing path.

Anne-Marie Mediwake explained that in 2000, broadcast media began to change and move toward reflecting the diversity in Canadian society. This is something that is reflected in the CBC Toronto's local news coverage that her and fellow anchor, Dwight

Drummond, decided was going to intentionally represent the diversity of Toronto in the newscast.

Once she has found an opening into the world of broadcast media, she still faced adversity. However, she recalled kind and encouraging words from fellow news anchor Lisa Laflamme. This helped her when she was feeling most discouraged and she urges everyone to use kind words and support others often.

Anne-Marie Mediwake had decided early on that she wanted kids and during her keynote address she spoke on what it was like to be a mother of triplets. She encouraged fathers to get involved as much as possible and for mothers to allow the sharing of child-rearing responsibilities.

Her final piece of advice for staying on a trailblazing path was to look to the things that made one feel grateful when one felt at their lowest.

For the full keynote address, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialogue.com/womens-day-luncheon-toronto-march-12/>

Women's Role in Public Life



In celebration of International Women's Day

The Interfaith Panel: Women's Role in Public Life, was organized in celebration of International Women's day. It consisted of five women from different faith backgrounds.

Ven. Jue Qian, from the Fo Guang Shan Temple of Toronto shared Buddhists' views on women and their inclusion in the Buddha's teachings. For them any sentient creature can achieve enlightenment and for many centuries now, Buddhists have welcomed nuns.

Marilyn Elphick, Christianity, from the University of St. Michael's College spoke on her experiences within catholicism and how many young people, especially young women were facing the changing landscape. She touched on her time of studying Theology, and her many female professors that provided a unique perspective.

Arliene Botnick, Judaism, of the Solel Congregation of Mississauga, turned to the role of women in Jewish scripture. She pointed out that Judaism, like many religions, placed women in secondary roles and indeed formalized this place. However she

spoke on her mother's and grandmother's experiences and achievements despite women being seen as secondary. She explained that she grew up in a different world than them, in which the first female rabbi had been ordained in 1972. Women in Judaism, including the Orthodox traditions, have been making strides, but even before all of this women have shown themselves to be just as capable as men.

Aysh Koca, Islam, of the Intercultural Dialogue Institute, spoke on her journey studying Islam and history. She spoke on why she chose to wear a headscarf—because she wanted to. When other women asked if it was her husband or father who required her to wear it, she felt as if her choice had been limited until she explained it was her choice alone.

The moderator for the evening was Urz Heer, interfaith and human rights activist, as well as Rogers TV show host.

For the complete video, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialogue.com/interfaith-panel-womans-role-in-public-life-march-8th-2015/>

How We Talk to God



In honour of World Interfaith Harmony Week, which was proposed by King Abdullah II of Jordan at the UN General Assembly in September 2010, IDI GTA hosted an interfaith panel in February 2015, in Toronto.

“How we Talk to God” was the theme of the evening, which featured a vegetarian meal, multi-faith art display, and a panel discussion featuring prayer experiences from diverse faith traditions.

The panel was comprised of Amar Erry, Head of Vedic Center, Imam Abdul Hai Patel, Pastor John Joseph Mastandrea, Rabbi Shalom Schachter, and Zenji Acharya, widely involved in the Buddhist community.

Zenji Acharya began by thanking IDI for allowing him to choose the evening’s speakers and introduced them to the attendees. He described the Honourable Paul Hellyer, the longest serving member on the Privy Council as someone who is unfailingly honest and frank, he gave the opening prayer.

Amar Erry, who is the president of the Vedic Cultural Centre, was the first speaker of the evening focusing on Hinduism. Zenji Acharya introduced him as a good friend, reflecting the close relationship between the sister religions of Buddhism and Hinduism. Amar Erry spoke of the Hindu nomination, given to them by outside invaders from their mispronunciation of the Indus river. They refer to themselves as Vedic, derived from the Vedas (scriptures). For them God gave the knowledge of how to lead good lives at the beginning of creation. Their name for God is Om, both a father and a mother figure with which individuals establish a personal relationship.

Zenji Acharya spoke of radicalism and Islam and how essential Indian Muslims are because of their pluralism. He then introduced Imam Abdul Hai Patel, who is Indian-Muslim, to speak on Islam and its prayer traditions. He spoke of the name, Allah, as having no attached gender as Allah is oneness of everything. He described the relationship one has with Allah as personal and one could call on it at any time. He also elaborated on the different pillars of Islam.

The next speaker was Pastor John Joseph Mastandrea, who Zenji Acharya introduced as someone who brings spirituality and young people back to religion. He spoke on the history of Christian and how its evolution should be celebrated, from the different translations of the Lord’s Prayer to the interestingly similar imagery one finds between the Bible and other religions.

Finally Zenji Acharya introduced Rabbi Shalom Schachter by telling the attendees about how one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world was located in India, a place that had experienced no anti-Semitism. The Rabbi explained the different forms of prayer, biblical and rabbinic, and showed the different objects for use in prayer. He spoke of the way one used their whole body in prayer, eyes to read the prayer, ears to listen, lips to speak, knees to kneel or prostrate, some people rocked, and above all the mind for meditation.

For full videos and Mary Dube’s beautifully sung *Peace Song*, please visit: <http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/interfaith-dinner-panel-how-we-talk-to-god/>

Meet Your Neighbours



When Ramadan comes, IDI Toronto's "Meet Your Neighbour" program takes a new turn with the arrival of Iftar dinners. The program is year-around, however the interest triples when Iftar dinners are there. For Muslims, the Iftar (breaking-of-fast) dinners are a crucial part of the holy month of Ramadan, and they try their best to avoid eating alone. So they either host a friend,

relative or a neighbour; or they are hosted by one of these. We live in one of the friendliest and neighbourly city in the world, how lovely it is to break your fast with a neighbour you just met. For photos of this great event., please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/ramadan-family-iftar-dinners-2014/>



GREATER BUDDHISM (MAHAYANA) WITH ZENJI ACHARYA



Mahayana

Greater Buddhism

Summary of the presentation by Suzanne Irwin

The Intercultural Dialogue Institute (IDI) welcomed Mahayana Buddhist Zenji Acharya to an intimate gathering at its GTA headquarters September 17, 2014. Zenji, dressed not in a monk's orange garb but in black trousers, a dress shirt and a suit jacket accompanied by ancient malas, his black shoulder length hair pulled back into a wavy pony tail, applauded IDI for hosting yet another event offering the opportunity for people of different backgrounds and religious beliefs to learn about Buddhism through open dialogue and inquiry.

Zenji, his slight frame against a backdrop of rare Mahayana Buddhist artwork, his brown eyes alive with the passion of his

forefathers, seeks to make Buddhism relatable to a modern world. His Buddhist Brahmin lineage harkens to Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism, Nagarjuna, the founder of the "Middle Way" School of Mahayana, Vasubandhu and the founders of Chinese Buddhism, Paramartha and Kumarajiva among others. His vision includes bringing back the Buddhism of his ancestors by returning to scripture and the fundamental values embedded in the sutras. He aims to dispel popular myths and misinterpretations about Buddhism by returning to the truth found in scripture and archaeology and by providing citations from the Buddhist discourses (sutras) focussing on the Lotus and Amitabha Sutras of Mahayana Buddhism.

Mahayana, meaning “Great Vehicle,” is known as the bodhisattva path. This path entails cultivating “perfections” and eliminating negativity for many lifetimes to reach full Buddhahood. This must manifest in the individual as a heartfelt desire to reach Buddhahood to help to free others from suffering. This yearning,



based on compassion for others, becomes the motivation of the entire bodhisattva path.

Buddhism emerged as a reaction to Hinduism and its caste system. Buddhism was founded by Gautama Buddha, born in India in the fifth or sixth century B.C.E., who developed a spiritual path called the Noble Eightfold Path. This path leads to Awakening and Nirvana, a state of freedom from suffering. This path was available to everyone regardless of caste or gender. The original school of Buddhism that developed from his teachings was called Hinayana or “Lesser Vehicle,” and led to Arhatship, but does not lead to full Buddhahood as in the later Mahayana schools of thought.

The Mahayana sutras were written predominantly in Sanskrit between the first and eighth centuries. Zenji focuses on the two most important sutras, the Lotus Sutra, one of the most revered in East Asia, written around 200 C.E., the oldest devotional scripture and the Amitabha Sutra. As Donald Mitchell says in his book, *Buddhism*, the Lotus Sutra teaches that “all living beings have the innately pure Buddha-nature, which is none other than the Dharmakaya, the body of the Buddha itself. So, awakening can be attained by laypersons and monastics, men and women alike.” Prince Shotoku quoted the Dhammapada that outlines the path to enlightenment: “Avoid evil, undertake good, and purify the mind. This is the teaching of the Buddha.” (Mitchell 276, 7)

Zenji states that Buddhism is misunderstood by some as a godless religion. The Amitabha sutras speak of Amitabha Buddha, the god of endless light and life who created a “Pure Land” in the heavenly Buddha realm where all those who wish to be saved can be reborn there and live in a land of bliss where there is no

sorrow. This land of bliss parallels the Christian God’s Kingdom of Heaven and promise of eternal life. Belief in Amitabha enables people to have hope in salvation in perilous times, just as Christians believe in Jesus as Saviour. Amitabha is seen as Lord of Heaven, Protector and Teacher. He is not viewed as a god to be feared. Zenji states that Amitabha was the first being to give salvation. He says that “there is no need for Christians to be threatened by what is in Buddhist scriptures.”

In closing, Zenji seeks to bring people the awareness that they must avoid taking elements from Buddhism’s tenets that suit their agendas. He revives Buddhism’s core doctrines by awakening the voices of his Brahmin ancestors through the sutras to keep the tradition alive. He says that “there should be a degree of truth brought back whenever we are teaching” and that “Buddhism must be given its rightful place.” Zenji affirms that Buddhism is the world’s first devotional religion; as such he seeks to bring devotion back to Buddhism.

After the presentation, the attendees engaged with Zenji in an animated question and answer period and stayed long afterward. IDI succeeded in offering a venue, a welcoming environment and a tasty luncheon conducive to encouraging open dialogue among people of differing religious and secular backgrounds.

For the full video please visit,

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/exploring-faiths-greater-bu-with-zenji-acharya/>



Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism



Professor

Ivan Kalmar

Prof. Ivan Kalmar is a professor in the Department of Anthropology, and Hon. Newton W. Rowell Professor at Victoria College, University of Toronto. His main work has addressed parallels in the image of Muslims and Jews in western Christian cultural history.

He co-edited a volume called *Orientalism and the Jews*. More recently, he has published *Early Orientalism: Imagined Islam and the Notion of Sublime Power*. In addition, he has published research articles dedicated to reviving the notion that Jews and Muslims have long been considered in the West as related to each other. This was not necessarily entirely based in objective fact, but was more so—and was certainly far more hopeful—than the all-too-current notion that they must be opposites and enemies.

On this luncheon's topic, Antisemitism and Islamophobia, Prof. Kalmar has co-written an article with a leading western Muslim author, Tariq Ramadan. This article will be appearing in the Routledge *Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*.

In his luncheon address, Prof. Kalmar spoke of the similar language that Islamophobia and anti-Semitism employed, describing them as dialects of the same language. He pointed out that the Islamophobia of today mirrors anti-Semitic rhetoric of a hundred years ago, including anti-immigration sentiment, "textual slavery", world domination, and double loyalty.

For his full talk, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialogue.com/luncheon-talk-by-prof-ivan-kalmar-islamophobia-anti-semitism/>

Relations of Jewish-Arab Youth in Israel



Building Heart:

It Takes a Community

Shared society educator Usnat Atamna spoke about the state of Jewish-Arab relations among youth in the north of Israel. Usnat works as a group facilitator at the Givat Haviva Educational Institute where she creates opportunities for dialogue among Jewish and Palestinian Israeli youth. Last summer Miss Atamna accompanied the Heart to Heart 2014 participants on their trip to Canada, and she now works with them to continue their group process back in Israel.

She is Palestinian Arab with Israeli citizenship and lives in the Palestinian Arab Israeli town of Bakka, located in the Shulash region. Usnat spoke about her experiences working with Palestinian and Jewish Israeli youth, the current state of relations

among Israel's diverse communities, and why she has chosen to pursue this work.

Karen Mock, the discussant of the event, is a human rights consultant, well known as a dynamic lecturer, workshop coordinator, and facilitator. She was Executive Director and CEO of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation from 2001 to 2005 and prior to that was National Director of the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada for twelve years, as well as executive director of the League's Human Rights Education and Training Centre, after several years as a teacher educator.

For Heart to Heart's full discussion, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialogue.com/luncheon-relations-of-jewish-arab-youth-in-israel/>

Three Simple Ideas for Improving Community Health



Three Simple Ideas From the YMCA

Medhat Mahdy is the President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Toronto and President of YMCA Ontario. Medhat has an extensive background in charitable sector leadership and strategy, as well as a 38-year relationship with the YMCA, as a member, volunteer, donor, and leader. He brings a deep understanding of the social determinants of health, and a conviction that we owe every one of our kids the opportunity to grow stronger every day in spirit, mind, and body.

Medhat has served in a variety of leadership capacities at both the YMCA of Greater Toronto and YMCA Canada. An architect of the YMCA of Greater Toronto's current 10-year strategic plan, Strong Start, Great Future, Medhat is committed to building 10 new YMCA Centres of Community across the GTA in order to help advance the Y's vision that "our communities will be home to the healthiest children, teens and young adults."

Medhat holds a Bachelor Degree from the University of Toronto and has served on a number of high profile task forces, including the Government of Ontario's Healthy Kids Panel.

- 1) Your health and well-being are determined by where you Live, Learn, Work, and Play
- 2) Health is an exceptional investment.
- 3) Healthy infrastructure and healthy programs are critical for fostering healthy young people and healthy communities.

Medhat Mahdy spoke on the YMCA's initiative "Strong Start, Great Future" and outlined how the YMCA had been seeing a worrying trend of declining health in youth. The Strong Start, Great Future campaign is based on studies that have shown community contributes to the well-being and health of youths and takes the social determinants of health into account. He calls an investment in health programs and "exceptional investment," believing that it should not be seen in terms of cost alone.

The YMCA took further community involvement when they asked homeless youths to help in the design of one of their new shelters to help foster hope, dignity, safety, and inclusion.

For the full video of Medhat Mahdy's address, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/president-of-ymca-gta-to-speak-on-community-health/>

Youth Violence, Communities and Faith



Senator

Don Meredith

Senator Don Meredith is co-founder and executive director of the GTA Faith Alliance, an interfaith group that is committed to finding solutions to youth violence. An active community and anti-crime advocate, Senator Meredith has been tireless in his work to counter gun and youth crime. He has partnered with churches, police, politicians, and communities to organize or participate in rallies and community events that work to find solutions to senseless violence.

Senator Meredith has been an entrepreneur and businessman for over 21 years. He completed several years of business and information technology studies at Ryerson University prior to forming Donscape Landscaping through which he supports his family and pastoral activities. An ordained evangelical minister, he is a volunteer pastor of Pentecostal Praise Centre Ministries in Maple, Ontario. He holds a masters degree from California State Christian University.

His prior community involvements include serving as co-chair of the Black Community Police Consultative Committee, and as a member of the York Region Police Chief's Advisory Council, the York Regional Community Police Liaison, the Toronto Police Service Chief's Advisory Service, the RCMP Consultative Committee, and the B'Nai Brith Canada Special Advisory Council to the League for Human Rights. Due to his

work in the community, Senator Meredith was appointed to the Senate of Canada on December 18, 2010 by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

He is married to Michelle, a special education teacher in York Region. They have two young adult children.

Senator Don Meredith focused on the importance of the faith community's involvement in the prevention of youth violence. He spoke of the perpetrator of the October 22, 2014 attacks on Parliament Hill, as well as previous instances of youth violence in the city of Toronto.

Throughout his address, he urged faith leaders to become surrogate parents to young women and men of the community, to help guide them and influence them away from violence. Simple things had big impacts, things as small as poor vision and its effect on learning, the critical role of education, and the importance of offering youth a job. He believes that while governments had a role to play in solving many of society's problems, they couldn't do it themselves so he emphasized the need for faith organizations to become involved in being there for young people lest they turn to gangs and other pursuits that could lead them to harm.

For his full talk, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/youth-violence/>

Public Citizenship In an Age of Diversity



Public Citizenship

In an Age of Diversity

Michael Chong co-founded the Dominion Institute, now known as Historica Canada, an organization committed to raising Canadians' awareness of history and civics and currently sits on its Board of Governors. He is also a former board member of the Elora Festival and the Elora Festival Singers, as well as a member of the Corporation of Trinity College, University of Toronto. Michael also attended Trinity College at the U of T where he obtained a degree in philosophy.

Michael Chong was first elected to Parliament in 2004 and represents the riding of Wellington-Halton Hills. As cabinet minister, Michael served as President of the Queen's Privy

Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister for Sport.

Prior to his election, Michael acted as Chief Information Officer for the National Hockey League Players' Association and as a senior technology consultant to the Greater Toronto Airports Authority for the redevelopment of Pearson International Airport. He has also held information technology positions at Barclay's Bank and Research Capital Corporation.

Please visit the website for the full video of his speech:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/luncheon-public-citizenship-in-an-age-of-diversity-with-hon-michael-chong/>

New Technologies and the Future of Libraries



Vickery Bowles,

Toronto City Librarian

Vickery Bowles is the City Librarian of the Toronto Public Library, one of the world's biggest and busiest public libraries. She believes passionately in the difference public libraries make in the lives of individuals, in communities and cities. Vickery has spent her career in public libraries, spearheading service development in a number of different leadership positions over the years. Vickery is looking forward to working with staff, residents and stakeholders on the many opportunities ahead for advancing and developing public library service for the 21st century.

Vickery is a member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Library Services to Multicultural Populations Standing Committee, a Board member for the Centre for Equitable Library Access to promote access to

books for Canadians with print disabilities, and has worked with the Canadian Urban Libraries Council and the Canadian Library Association to advocate on behalf of libraries for access to e-collections on fair and reasonable terms.

Vickery spoke on the numerous changes that library technologies have seen throughout the years. "Books are still at the heart and soul of libraries," she said, "but there's so much more going on in libraries these days." In her talk, she highlights the new roles and activities that libraries are involved in providing.

For her full talk, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/new-technologies-and-the-future-of-libraries-toronto-city-librarian/>

Food and Culture - Seven Selected Recipes



Saucy Lady

Jennifer Bain

With a special 7 course vegetarian menu showcasing the diverse & delicious recipes of Ontario selected from the award-winning cookbook: “Crafword Street Salad”, “Ethiopian Fava Beans”, “Garlic Basil Potatoes”, “Mujaddara”, “Pancier Masala”, “Pasta (Tomato & Basil)”, “One-Bowl Chocolate Cake”.

Food editor/Saucy Lady columnist Jennifer Bain runs the Star test kitchen and writes about her eating and drinking adventures with a focus on emerging food cultures and farmers.

Her first book, *The Toronto Star Cookbook: More Than 150 Diverse and Delicious Recipes Celebrating Ontario*, won the Taste Canada award at the 17th annual Food Writing Awards in 2014. She has also written *The Best of the Holiday Cookie Calendar*, an

exclusive Star Dispatches eRead cookbook available in the Star Store (starstore.ca).

For great stories behind the seven chosen recipes, including that of the Mike Harris cake, and Jennifer Bain’s multicultural food experiences through Toronto, please watch the video at:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/foodculture/>

Diversité et Défis de l'Intégration

Miloud Chennoufi holds a Ph.D from the University of Montreal. He teaches international relations at the Canadian Forces College where he serves as chair of the Department of Security and International Affairs. He is a visiting fellow at Glendon College (York University). His first book *Great Powers and Islamism* (in French) was published in 2003. During the 1990s, prior to moving to Canada, he was a journalist in his native Algeria.

Diversity and Challenges Of Integration

Multiculturalism, as a policy and a way of life, respects diversity in our society, though it continues to be the target of critics. Although at times these criticisms are unjustified, they should not be ignored. They must be taken into consideration, especially when they relate to the distorted abuse of rights and privileges associated with multiculturalism. Based on the premise of rights and responsibilities, a clearly defined multicultural policy can respond to critics who seek to destroy its very foundations, and abusers whose motivations are to keep communities separate one from the other.

Miloud Chennoufi began his interest in integration and multiculturalism when after ten years of having lived in Montreal, he realized that Canadian society wasn't past the challenges and questions posed by these aspects of diversity. In his talk he outlined his views on diversity, the idea that there was a time before it of homogeneity is a myth. For Miloud Chennoufi, diversity is a human condition.

As diversity is a reality, he was concerned with how one should engage with this reality. For Miloud Chennoufi, multiculturalism is a sophisticated philosophy that requires a certain amount of political engagement.

He addressed 3 kinds of critics of multiculturalism: the bigot, who should be ignored because he could not be reasoned with; the universalist, who presented an alternative form of assimilation according to Miloud Chennoufi; and finally the profiler, who only calls on one's multicultural heritage when it is of benefit.

To the last two, he responded to the problems and failures that past attempts at assimilation caused. For the final group, he emphasized that multiculturalism should never come above the core tenets of a democratic society and the laws of a particular country; that there are limits to the freedoms of multiculturalism.



Finally he laid out four aspects of multiculturalism: 1) it is always within the limits of society. 2) Founded on recognition: to be recognized, one must recognize others and so this eliminated the possibility of separation among cultures. 3) Dialogue is fundamental: individual, intra and inter community. 4) there is an ideal of authenticity, to not only pick up multiculturalism when it is convenient. For the full speech, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialogue.com/diners-dialogue-diversite-et-defis-de-lintegration/>

Unspoken role of Documentary Festivals in World Socio-Politics

Chris McDonald

Hot Docs Festival

Chris McDonald was appointed Executive Director of Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in October of 1998. In 2013, he was named Hot Docs President.

A native of Montreal, Chris holds a degree in Film Studies from McGill University. Prior to Hot Docs, Chris was Development Director for five years at the prestigious Canadian Film Centre (CFC), the advanced film, television, and new media training centre founded by director Norman Jewison.

Prior to his term at the CFC, Chris worked for two national environmental organizations. He also sits on several industry advisory boards, and has served on panels and juries at leading film festivals and markets around the world.

With a mandate to advance and celebrate the art of documentary and to showcase the work of documentary filmmakers, Hot Docs is now recognized as North America's largest documentary festival. Its flagship Hot Docs Forum, which was established in 2000, is North America's largest documentary market event. The festival attracted an audience of almost 200,000 in 2014, along with 2,500 registered delegates.

Hot Docs also administers a \$4 million fund for Canadian documentaries, a \$1 million fund for African filmmakers and provides free screenings to over 70,000 students each year. In March of 2012 the organization opened the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema in Toronto, one of the only year-round documentary-focused cinemas in the world.

In his speech Chris McDonald explained the Hot Docs Forum in detail, describing it as a hybrid event—half public and half industry—which also hosts lectures, discussions, masterclasses, and the like.

In addition to elaborating on the work that Hot Docs is involved in, he spoke on the history of documentary filmmaking with its origins as a tool that was mostly used by the right or in propaganda. It has evolved to be a tool of the left, to champion social justice causes such as activism, protests, political and



economic movements, global issues, wars, conflicts, as well as happier topics and cultural expression.

Chris McDonald touched on the Hot Docs' policy to not endorse or oppose stances, to only support the work of documentaries regardless of opinions. Though neutral, Hot Docs encourages filmmakers to tackle tough issues, to challenge established beliefs and "give a voice to the voiceless." The organization recently commissioned a study on how to transfer post-screening inspiration into action to drive social and legislative change.

For his complete speech, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialogue.com/luncheon-with-hot-docs-president-chris-mcdonald-sep-11th/>

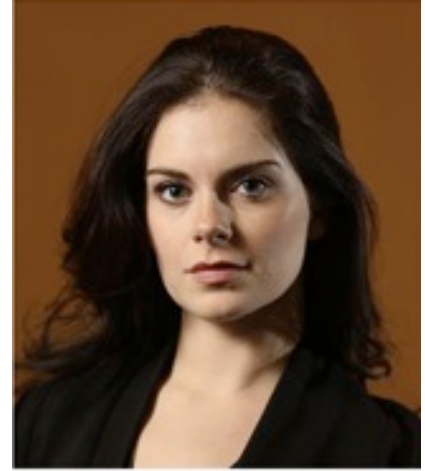
Covering Toronto as a Journalist



Greg McArthur



Angela Murphy



Robyn Doolittle

Toronto, 4th Largest

North American Metropolis

Toronto editor of Globe and Mail, Angela Murphy, and investigative reporter Greg McArthur shared their experiences and challenges while covering the 4th largest metropolis of North America: Toronto.

Greg McArthur had kindly agreed to fill in for Robyn Doolittle, who had to miss the event as she was given a last-minute out-of-town assignment by the Globe and Mail.

Angela Murphy has been the Toronto editor at the Globe and Mail since 2010. Prior to that she was an assistant news editor on the National desk, arriving at The Globe from the National Post in 2007. She was part of the team of journalists that launched the Post, and became the Front Page editor there in 2005.

She spent her first decade in journalism as a reporter at the St. Catharines Standard. Angela has a Master of Arts, Journalism, from Western University, and a B.A. Honours from the University of Toronto in English and Political Science. She was co-editor of UofT's campus paper, "The Newspaper".

Robyn Doolittle is the bestselling author of *Crazy Town: The Rob Ford Story* and an investigative reporter

with The Globe and Mail. She began her career at the Toronto Star, covering crime and then municipal politics. While on the city hall beat, Doolittle began investigating rumours of the mayor's troubled personal life.

In 2014, the Toronto Star was awarded the prestigious Michener Award for its investigation into Rob Ford's substance abuse. A graduate of Ryerson University's journalism school, Doolittle was named one of the program's 12 notable alumni at its 60th anniversary in the fall of 2013. She has lived in Toronto since 2002.

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/coveringtoronto/>



Canadian Values and Our Multicultural Heritage

Rubin

Friedman

Member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Rubin Friedman held a speech at one of IDI GTA's Ideologue Luncheons to discuss Canada's multiculturalism.

Over the last forty years, both in the government and in the voluntary sector, he has worked on issues of human rights, multiculturalism and official languages on local, national, and international levels.

He was Director of the Civic Participation Programs in Multiculturalism and was recognized as an expert on issues of civic values and combating prejudice and racism. He played a central role in the writing and reviewing the text, "Our Canada," especially the section dealing with "Canadian Values."

In his address, he began with the criticism that appears in the media that multiculturalism somehow lessons Canadian values. However, when Canadians are asked about 60–70% respond with multiculturalism as a Canadian value itself.

For Rubin Friedman, a national value is something that all aspects of a country, from its citizens to its governments should aspire to, an ideal principal.

He discusses the evolution of diversity and multiculturalism in Canada, right from when there were the first Europeans in Canada. The Native Canadian groups were not homogenous. The British and French themselves were also not homogenous and brought many of their regional diversities with them. Indeed you can still see the difference today not only between the Acadiens communities and the Quebecois, but also within Quebec itself. All of this, he notes, is even before we speak of the diversity that immigration brought to Canada.

The British administration in a way began dealing with multiculturalism when they adapted to deal with the many disparate groups of the early Canadian cultural landscape. They even had a term at the time, "privilege", which would grant concessions for other cultures, like the French to keep their language.



So from the beginning, multiculturalism and adaptation to other cultures became a value in the Canadian political landscape. With Confederation, it was recognized that it was important to keep these values and privileges that were granted to the myriad cultures, as well as the interests of the provinces that were joining the Confederation.

The result of these various influences into the Confederation resulted in variations everywhere, between cultural groups, provinces, religions, etc. Though this was far from a just system, it was the beginnings of adapting to many different cultures and identities within Canada. How to keep the groups interested in staying together?

For the further exploration into Canada's multicultural beginnings, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/multiculturel/> (French)

http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/multiculturel_eng/ (English)

Community Policing and Dropping Crime Rates



Chief Blair for Idealogue Luncheon

Chief William Bill Blair was appointed Chief of the Toronto Police Service on April 26, 2005. Chief Blair started his 35-plus year policing career as a beat officer in downtown Toronto, and continued with assignments in drug enforcement, organized crime units, and major criminal investigations.

Promoted to the senior ranks of the Service, his postings included Divisional Commander, Community Policing Programs, and Detective Operations, responsible for all specialized investigative units including the Homicide Squad, Hold-Up Squad, Sex Crimes Unit, Fraud Squad, Forensic Identifications Services, Intelligence Services, and Organized Crime Enforcement,

including the Guns and Gangs Unit, and the Repeat Offender Program.

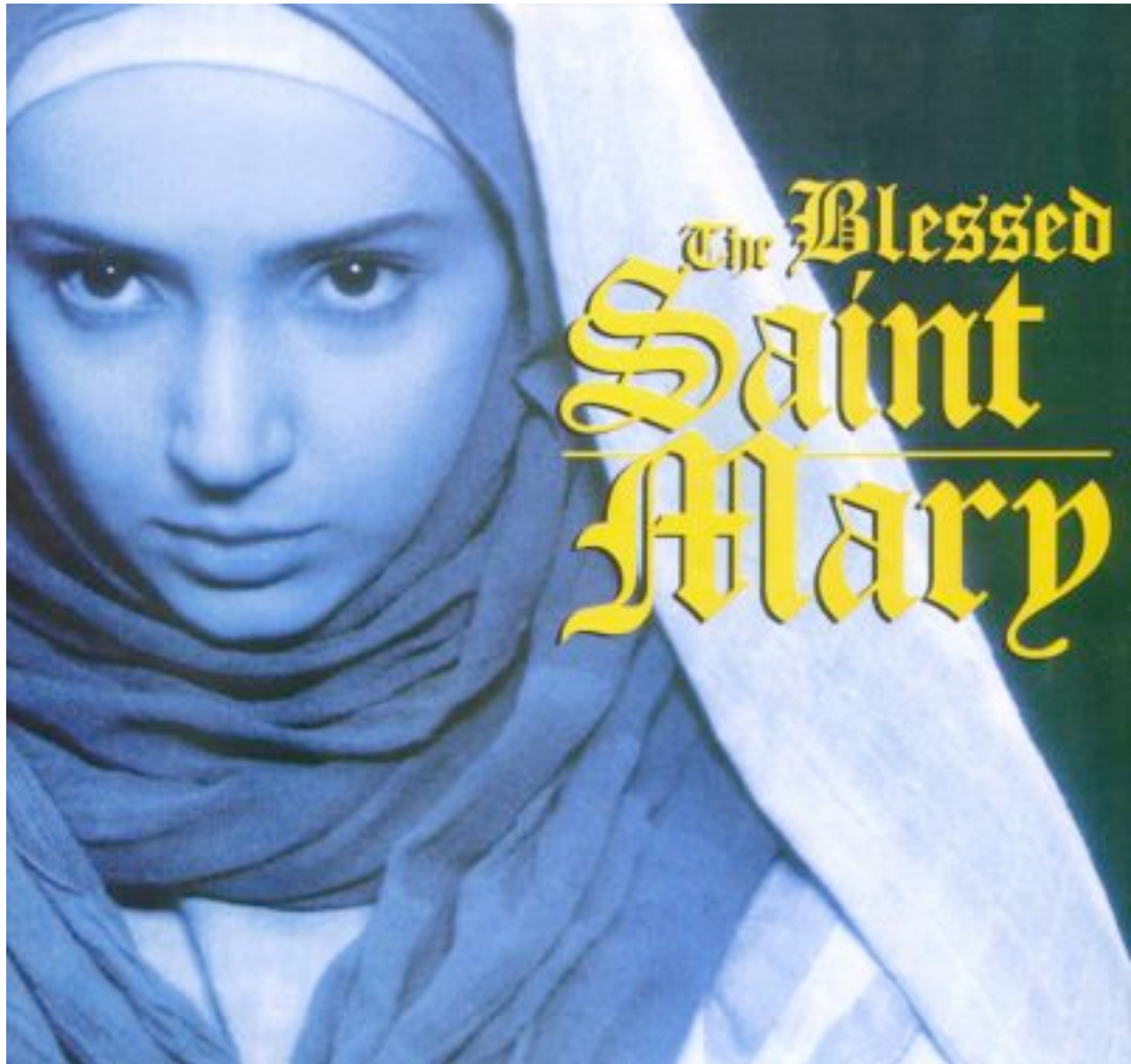
As Toronto's Chief of Police, he has overseen the development of the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) to combat violent crime. Rapid response teams are deployed to at-risk neighbourhoods to enhance enforcement and support local policing initiatives while promoting the role of Community Response Units and the 'neighbourhood police officer'.

Chief Blair spoke on the evolution of policing in Toronto and how the police force has implemented initiatives such as language and cultural training to adapt to the city's diversity.

For the full video, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/chiefblair/>

Mary: Bridge Between Muslims and Christians?



Mary, **Mother of Jesus**

On November 2nd, 2014, IDI GTA was happy to help organize a screening and talk of “The Blessed St. Mary” (2002) as a tool for the interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

Dr. Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour is a screenwriter and lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Islamic College, London, UK. He spoke on Islamic sources he used. Reverend Dr. J. Dorcas Gordon is the Principal of Knox College, Toronto, and a Professor of Biblical Interpretation and Preaching. He spoke on

the biblical depiction of Mary in relation to the Islamic Engagement.

Other organizers for the event were: the Canadian Dawn Foundation; ECUT; the Multi-Faith Centre, University of Toronto; the Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto; and Knox College.

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/screening-and-talk-mary-bridge-between-muslims-and-christians/>

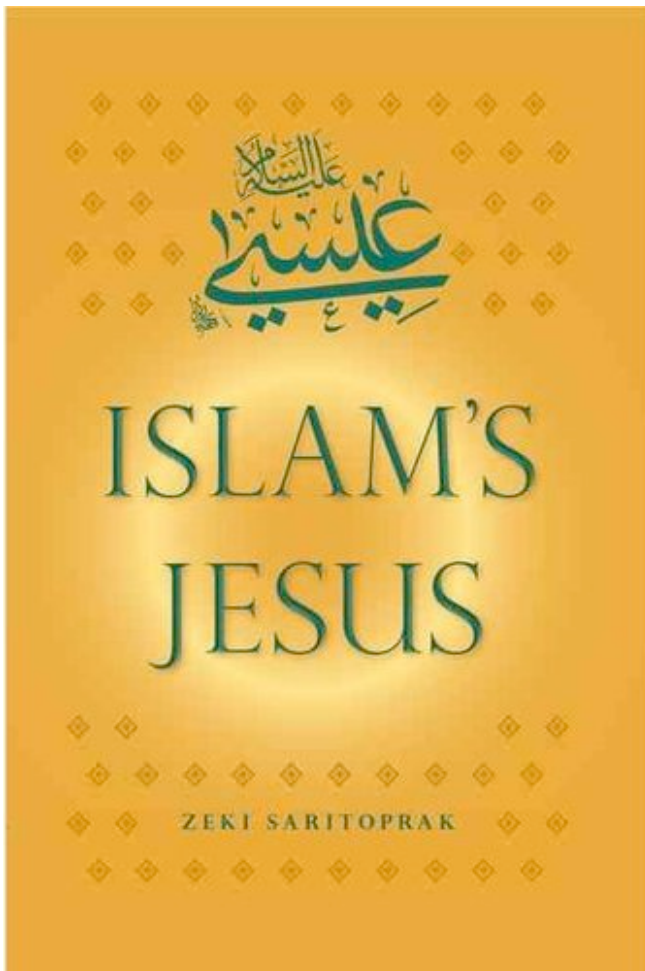
Islam's Jesus

On September 22, the IDI GTA and Regis College co-hosted a lecture and book signing, at Regis College, of *Islam's Jesus*, the new book by Dr. Zeki Saritoprak.

About

Islam's Jesus

Few people realize that Jesus was a prominent messenger of God in Islam and that Muslims believe in the return of Jesus. *Islam's Jesus* takes a bold yet candid look at the highly charged topic of Jesus's place in Islam, exploring some of the religion's least understood aspects. Actively engaged in efforts to promote interfaith dialogue and harmony, Saritoprak thoughtfully argues that the shared belief in Jesus presents an excellent opportunity for understanding between Muslims and Christians.



Dr. Zeki Saritoprak is associate professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies and the Beddiüzaman Said Nursi Chair in Islamic Studies at John Carroll University.

Professor Saritoprak is the author of over thirty academic articles and encyclopedia entries on topics in Islam. He has served as guest editor for issues of the journals *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* and *Muslim World*.

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/islams-jesus-book-signing-and-lecture-september-22/>

Tolerance Day Brunch



International Day For Tolerance

On the day of its fiftieth anniversary, 16 November 1995, UNESCO's Member States adopted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. Among other things, the Declaration affirms that tolerance is neither indulgence nor indifference. It is respect and appreciation of the rich variety of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance recognizes the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. People are naturally diverse; only tolerance can ensure the survival of mixed communities in every region of the globe.

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/tolerance-day-brunch-november-15-2014/>



Gina Valle speaks several languages and holds a PhD in Teacher Education & Multicultural Studies from The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto.

Prior to receiving her PhD, Gina earned a Masters of Education in Curriculum and Bachelor of Education (Ontario Teacher's Certificate).

Gina received the Diamond Jubilee Medal from the Office of the Governor General for her significant work in diversity through the organization she founded, Diversity Matters.

<http://www.diversity-matters.ca/gina-valle.html>

Tolerance: a word used too often to represent being patient and accepting of what is different rather than learning to understand the other, truly honouring our diversity.

Newroz Spring Festival



Nowruz meaning “The New Day” is the name of the New Year in Eastern Traditions. It is celebrated on the day of the astronomical Northward equinox, which usually occurs on March 21 or the previous/following day depending on where it is observed.

Nowruz has been celebrated by people from diverse ethnic communities and religious backgrounds for thousands of years. It is a secular holiday that is enjoyed by people of several different faiths. These include peoples of Turkey, Azerbaijan, the North Caucasus, Iran, Northern Iraq, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and other scattered populations in Central Asia.

In 2010, the General Assembly of United Nations recognized the International Day of Nowruz, describing it as a spring festival which has been celebrated for over 3,000 years calling on world countries to draw on the holiday’s rich history to promote peace and goodwill.

During the meeting of the Inter-governmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage of the United Nations, Nowruz was officially registered on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Additionally, on March 30th 2009 the Parliament of Canada, by unanimous consent, had passed a bill to add Nowruz to the national calendar of Canada.

For more photos, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/newroz-spring-festival/>

St. Philip's Lutheran Church

Ramadan Iftar Dinner



Every year the Intercultural Dialogue Institute GTA hosts a series of “Community Iftar (fast-breaking) Dinners” during the month of Ramadan. Iftar dinners bring together people of various faith and Ethno-Cultural backgrounds and serve as a means of fostering dialogue and cross-cultural awareness.

Each of these dinners has received many attendees from all walks of life including government representatives, MPs, MPPs, diplomats, bureaucrats, professionals, business people, representatives from media and academia, as well as religious and community leaders. St. Philip's Lutheran Church Ramadan Iftar Dinner was among these dinners held on June 30th 2014.

Keynote

Imam Hamid Slimi

Dr. Hamid Slimi is the Imam, Resident Scholar, and Founder of Sayeda Khadija Centre. He has been serving as an Imam, Chaplain, Educator, and Consultant in Canada for over 17 years in different religious and educational institutions.

He is also the Founder and President of the [Faith of Life Network](#), the Founder and Chairman of [Canadian Centre for Deen Studies](#), the former Chairman of the [Canadian Council of Imams](#) (2006–2013) and a lecturer at the Islamic Institute of Toronto.

The dignitaries whom this event had the pleasure of welcoming were:

Ted Opitz, MP Etobicoke Centre; Bernard Trottier, MP Etobicoke-Lakeshore; Karen Stintz, Toronto Mayoral Candidate.

For more information, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/st-philips-lutheran-church-ramadan-iftar-dinner/>



Dwayne Morgan Ramadan Iftar Dinner



Dwayne Morgan

Change Begins With Me

Dwayne Morgan began his career as a spoken word artist in 1993. In 1994, while still in high school, he founded Up From The Roots entertainment, to promote the positive artistic contributions of African Canadian and urban influenced artists.

A member of the Writers' Union of Canada, Morgan has received both the African Canadian Achievement Award, and the Harry Jerome Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Dwayne Morgan is the winner of three Canadian Urban Music Awards (2001, 2003, 2005). In 1998, Morgan introduced regular poetry slams to Toronto, and has watched them blossom across the GTA and beyond ever since.

In 2005 he was recognized as Poet of Honour at the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word in Vancouver. In 2008 Morgan's contribution to the Arts and Canadian society were recognized on the Legacy Black History Month poster.

Most recently, Dwayne Morgan has published 6 books, *Her Favourite Shoes*, *The Sensual Musings of Dwayne Morgan* (2010), *The Making of A Man* (2005), *The Man Behind The Mic* (2002), *Long Overdue* (1999), *The Revolution Starts Within* (1996), and *Straight From The Roots* (1995). In 2009, Morgan's work was translated into French, culminating in the book, *Le Making of d'un Homme*.

His albums include *Another Level* (1997), *The Evolution* (2001), *Soul Searching* (2003), *A Decade in the Making* (2004), *Mellow Mood*:

The End of the Beginning (2007), and *Idle Hands* (2011). In 2008, Morgan released a commemorative DVD entitled, *Dwayne Morgan The First Fifteen*.

Dwayne Morgan has performed for the former Governor General of Canada, Hon. Michaëlle Jean, and has shared the stage with many of Canada's top artists including Russell Peters, Deborah Cox, Kardinal Offishal, Jilly Black, K-OS, and Nelly Furtado. He has opened for international artists Alicia Keys, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Mutabaruka, Ursula Rucker, Colin Channer, and Saul Williams, and recorded with Canadian artists including Grammy nominee, Drake.

In his talk, Dwayne Morgan begins with the idea of "change beginning with us as individuals and then spreading from us as individuals," to effect changes of those we work with and interact with.

Among childhood anecdotes and challenges as immigrants, Dwayne Morgan touched on "how important it is to appreciate who we are and love who we are in our own skin. We cannot lift, help, or affirm others when we are hiding pockets of ourselves."

For his full address, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialogue.com/dwayne-morgan-change-begins-with-me-at-ramadan-iftar-dinner/>

Ramadan Iftar Dinners



Ramadan Iftar Dinner with the Town of Ajax and ICCAD

The Ramadan Intercultural Friendship Dinner was held on July 22nd, 2014 and began with a speech about People, Community, Leadership, and how it can impact the future. The keynote speaker of the night was Dan Carter who spoke from a Pentecostal perspective on the leadership of individuals and the purpose that one could find in life, along with lessons of hope, forgiveness.

The guest of honour for the evening was Hon. Chris Alexander, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who had previously spent a Ramadan in Afghanistan. He touched on the topics that he believed lay at the heart of every religion: the conviction to be a better human. For Chris Alexander, religions and religious events like Ramadan helped us to look at our mistakes and learn from them.

Shashi Bhattia of the Indo-Canadian Cultural Association of Durham (ICCAD) noted that everyone, regardless of background was part of the Canadian family. Guests also enjoyed a live Flamenco guitar performance by Juneyt Yetkiner.

For full videos please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/ramadan-iftar-dinner-with-the-town-of-ajax-iccad/>

Fundraising Dinner for The Canadian Diabetes Association

On July 28th, 2014, the intercultural Ramadan dinner organized in partnership with Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) have attracted an audience from all backgrounds raising \$1295 for CDA. Money was raised through tickets sales and silent auction. IDI GTA is proud for having been able to contribute for such an important cause. <http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/fundraising-iftar-dinner-for-canadian-diabetes-association-jul-28-2014/>



Toronto Police Service



Ramadan Iftar Dinner with The Toronto Police Service

IDI GTA and Toronto Police Service organized the 3rd Annual Ramadan Friendship Dinner for Community Leaders on July 26th, 2014, at the Plunkett Campus of the Nile Academy.

About 200 guests enjoyed experiencing the fast-breaking tradition of their Muslim neighbours. Chair of Toronto Police Service Board, Alok Mukherjee and MP Judy Sgro were among the dignitaries, who attended the dinner.

Toronto Acorns, a choir composed of children at varying ages, sang songs and its members received certificates from Toronto Police.

For more details, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/ramadan-iftar-dinner-with-toronto-police-service/>



Intercultural Dinners



Ramadan Iftar

Intercultural Dinner in Aurora

The Aurora Intercultural Iftar dinner was held at the Aurora Cultural Centre with York CAS. Its theme was “Mental Health and Social Inclusion.” The speaker for the evening was Steve Luire, Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Toronto Branch. The evening’s guest of honour was Geoffrey Dawe, Mayor of Aurora. For more details, please visit: <http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/ramadan-intercultural-dinner-in-aurora/>



Ramadan Iftar

Intercultural Dinner in Brampton

The IDI hosted an Intercultural Dinner for Ramadan Iftar with Carabram, Brampton’s multicultural festival.

For photos of the event, please visit:

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/ramadan-intercultural-dinner-in-brampton/>



The Hizmet Movement

2015 Gandhi King Ikeda Peace Award to Fethullah Gulen

Atlanta, April 9, 2015 – Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College awarded its prestigious 2015 Gandhi King Ikeda Peace Award to Islamic scholar Fethullah Gulen in recognition of his life-long dedication to promoting peace and human rights. The chapel has been giving a community builders prize and a peace award since 2001. Past recipients of these awards include leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Andrew Young and Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu.

In a statement presented today, Mr. Gulen said he was humbled by the honor and accepted this award on behalf of the Hizmet participants from different nations, religions and ethnic backgrounds who have devoted themselves to serving fellow humans.

“These educators keep schools open in places like Iraq despite the ISIS threat; they provide education opportunities to girls in Nigeria and Afghanistan; doctors, nurses and humanitarian relief workers serve under dire conditions in places like Somalia and Sudan; entrepreneurs donate to charitable causes despite economic hardship.” He said in his statement: “You were kind enough to recognize their efforts and I simply accept this award on their behalf.” For his full statement, please visit: Fethullah Gulen Statement Accepting the 2015 Gandhi King Ikeda Peace Award.

The Gandhi King Ikeda Peace Award was designed to promote the importance of positive social transformation by honoring those who demonstrate extraordinary global leadership toward reconciling differences. Although Mahatma Gandhi was a Hindu from India, Martin Luther King Jr. a Christian from the U.S., and Daisaku Ikeda a Japanese Buddhist, the overwhelming ethical consistency in the global reach of their philosophies and influence serve as an inspiration to all the world's citizens.

The chapel's dean Dr. Lawrence Carter said that the chapel will recognize Gulen alongside photos of Gandhi, King and Ikeda in the chapel, as a Muslim representative of the same spirit. For details on the award, please visit: <http://www.morehouse.edu/mlkchapel/our-work/college-of-ministers-laity/>.

Text taken from: http://www.afsv.org/fethullah-gulen-awarded-2015-gandhi-king-ikeda-peace-award/#.VZa_8e1Vikp

Fethullah Gulen Acceptance Speech

“I am humbled by the kindness of the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College to consider me as a recipient of the prestigious 2015 Gandhi King Ikeda Peace Award.

I can only accept this award on behalf of the participants of the Hizmet movement who devoted themselves to serving fellow humans without expecting anything in return. Educators who served thousands of miles away from their homes near arctic circle in sub-freezing temperatures; those who continued to keep their schools open in northern Iraq despite the threat of ISIS occupation; those in Nigeria and Afghanistan who provide educational opportunities to girls; doctors, nurses and humanitarian relief workers who served in Somalia and Sudan under dire conditions; and entrepreneurs who compete in donating to charitable causes despite facing economic hardship themselves. These devotees of love who come from different nations, religions, and ethnic backgrounds are the ones whose work is recognized with this award.

They are the ones who seek happiness in the happiness of others. What unites them and the pioneers of human rights in Asia, in Africa, in the United States, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and all around the world is their commitment to humanity. To hold every human as dignified and to be committed to the dignity of every human is a sign of respect for their Creator.

I have always prayed to God that He would include me among these blessed individuals but never considered myself as the leader of any of them. You were kind enough to recognize their efforts and sacrifices and I simply accept this award on their behalf.

My health doesn't allow me to join you on this meaningful occasion. But for spirits united around high human values, physical proximity is never needed for a conversation. Humbled to be included among those whose work is recognized through this award, I thank the organizing committee for their consideration.”

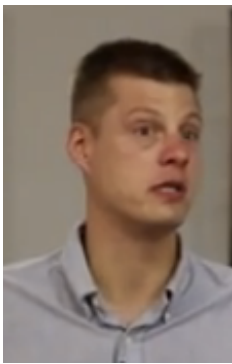
http://www.afsv.org/fethullah-gulen-statement-accepting-the-2015-gandhi-king-ikeda-peace-award/#.VZa_O-1Viko

Atlas of Thoughts

Canadian politician and former Toronto City Councillor,
Davenport Wards

Adam Giambrone

"The Hizmet Movement for me is the movement that has promoted interfaith dialog. It's promoted cultural understanding between groups. ... I think what they have done is opened up a culture, religion, and a country, specifically Turkey, to a lot of



people. I think there's a lot of value to that."

"Mr. Gülen is a gentleman who I have a lot of respect for. And I think from what I've read and what I've heard when he's spoken and his writings, he's a man with a lot of integrity. He is, his life embodies the values that he has promoted, which I think are very important."

"I also think that here in North America there are, there is traditionally less of an understanding of the Islamic culture,

the Muslim contributions to the world culture, and I think the way the Hizmet Movement has been able to present Islam, it's hard to do it uniformly 'cause it's such a diverse religion with so many different parts, and obviously different manifestations of it in terms of different cultures and countries. But I think the Hizmet Movement here in a North American context does a very good job of welcoming people in, non-Muslims, and encouraging their understanding and appreciation of one of the world's fundamental and very important religions."

"... what the Hizmet Movement has done is it's allowed, it's made it easy for people, who want to have an understanding, who want to be part of different cultures... But it's made it easy for them, and as a result, I think you have a lot more people who are willing to do that, and willing to participate in, and I think that's fantastic, and I've seen this, when I've participated in events, or talked to people who have participated in events for the first time associated with the Hizmet Movement. You know, they're, at the beginning you don't know what, they don't know what's going to get in, but when you talk to them after, people are very, you know, very positive. In fact I've never talked to anybody who's had a negative experience, and I think that speaks volumes to the contribution and to how it's presented."

Video here:

<http://gulenmovement.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=46b1698be6e406c7b3b2caa28&id=4ce194a5ad&e=4b26036d3d>

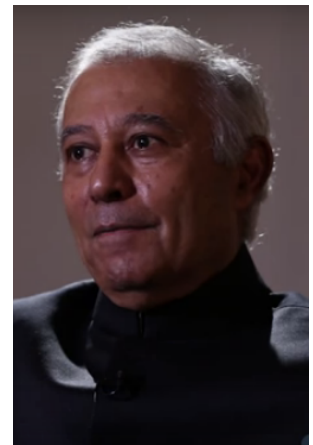
Scholar on Hinduism and VP of the Hindu Institute of Learning

Chander Khanna

"Fethullah Gülen is, in one short sentence, is considered by those of us from outside looking in, is a formidable ambassador/interpreter of the most sublime, most authentic underpinnings of not just Islamic traditions, spiritual traditions."

"... the view taken by someone like Fethullah Gülen, and people that he speaks of, that he emulates, sages, is a perfect square in which there are triangles. And each triangle has its own internal logic, consistency, rituals, modes of conduct, and rules, regulations proscribed, but each triangle points to one center. And each triangle is within the square. It follows the properties of the triangle, but also that square. So no one triangle is better than the other, but what sets the Hizmet Movement apart from many others is that it encourages those within the triangle of the Hizmet Movement, or in this case Islam, Turkish Islam, to move out of the triangle and visit all the other triangles, and have other people, other triangles, come and visit."

"[Dialogue] Absolutely essential, and my immediate reaction is a sense of gratitude. For the best of us, and particularly the Hizmet Movement for having overcome, continue to overcome those inevitable, inevitable, not only questionings, but inevitable criticism, if you wish. That's part of our, part of the cross we have to bear. For every hundred new admirers of any initiative, there'll be at least ten percent who cannot stand the attention being given. So that is to be expected. Understood. It's always been there. ... But to persevere, despite those criticisms, which are inevitable forces of life, not only persevere, but to flourish, for which all people like me can express their gratitude."



Video here:

<http://gulenmovement.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=46b1698be6e406c7b3b2caa28&id=5981854536&e=4b26036d3d>

Atlas of Thoughts

Associate Editor for the Catholic Register

Michael Swan

"He's [Fethullah Gulen] using the past in order to go forward into the world. Into the future. And that's important. That's important. It's a challenge not just in the Muslim world, it's a challenge in every part of the world."

"The attempt to create a positive face for globalization is, I think, the unique contribution of Hizmet."

"Interfaith dialog, as Hizmet has demonstrated in its Iftar dinners begins with a real social relationship. People have to actually know each other. They have to actually care about each other. And that's the starting point. ..."

"... if Hizmet wasn't running its social programs, you know, UN organizations and hundreds and thousands of other NGOs would also be there, you know. But every effort, every contribution is



another opportunity to say, "we're all in this together." And in the sense that it gives a different picture of what Islam is, what Muslims are, that's important. In the sense that it breaks up the isolation on both sides, it's important. And in the sense that it's real, practical help to people who really are suffering, it's important."

Michael Swan studied the department of English in University of Toronto, and later went to New York University to obtain a higher degree.

Michael Swan later went to China as an English teacher for a brief period of time and he was also an award-winning photographer. Michael Swan is also the associate-editor for a Catholic newspaper called "[The Catholic Register](#)."

Video here:

<http://gulenmovement.us9.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=46b1698be6c406c7b3b2caa28&id=f689ed636f&c=4b26036d3d>

Theologian and scholar of Hindu-Christian Studies

Reid B. Locklin

"... I think that the first contribution is to say that religion will, can and will, be a force for building the common good. ..."

".... I think the other big contribution is to say that the foundation of harmony is friendship. And so you try to create contexts in which persons who are different meet socially, and can become friends. And that's maybe most dramatically symbolized by the various trips to Turkey, in which people from many different places have a chance to visit Turkey and meet lots of different people in an informal, friendly setting"



"... I think that the wisdom of the presentation of Islam by the Hizmet Movement is to recognize that Islam is not monolithic. That Islam is diverse. There are many different expressions of Islam, including in Turkey. And so I think that the Hizmet Movement has said, "we're ambassadors. We're ambassadors of a particular lens on Islam." A particular understanding of Islam that, as much mystical as it is Muslim. That's as much Turkish as it is Muslim. That's as much committed to a certain vision of a civic society as it is Muslim."

Reid B. Locklin is a theologian and scholar of Hindu-Christian Studies from St. Michael's College, and University of Toronto. He also has an over-developed sense of irony.

St. Michael's College is a college of the University of Toronto, founded in 1852 by the Congregation of St. Basil of Annonay, France. While mainly an undergraduate college for liberal arts and sciences, St. Michael's retains its Roman Catholic affiliation through its postgraduate divinity school.

St. Michael's is most closely associated with teaching and research in the humanities. It is also known for being home to Marshall McLuhan throughout his influential career as a philosopher and communication theorist, from 1946 until his death in 1980. The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies resides within the college, while St. Michael's College School is an affiliated private preparatory school.

Video here:

<http://gulenmovement.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=46b1698be6c406c7b3b2caa28&id=f90a4cb919&c=4b26036d3d>

News Coverage

thestar.com

GTA

News / GTA

GTA Muslims look forward to Ramadan, even in a difficult year

This year's Ramadan will mean the longest daylight fasting hours in 33 years, but the Khalilov family embraces the holy month.

By: Eric Andrew-Gee Staff Reporter, Published on Sun Jun 21 2015

At the Khalilovs on Friday, plates were passed around and piled high with meat pastries, cheese pie and other traditional Turkic dishes. But there was something restrained and even solemn in the way people ate, though it was their first taste of food since dawn. They were thinking about God, some later said. And they were thinking about the truly hungry, the involuntarily hungry.

"There are so many people in the world who break their fast only with water," explained Khalil Khalilov, 25.

Ramadan is the mostly spiritually charged time of year for many Muslims: believers are meant to perform good deeds, read the Koran and think pious thoughts. This immersion in religious concerns can make the month's physical trials less seem less important, and less daunting.

"There's a saying that we fast with our mind, with our eyes and our ears," said Khalilov, an entrepreneur and real estate agent. "When a person is fasting, it makes him more considerate about the God ... As long as you have this greater purpose in mind, the day goes by very quickly."

Of course, difficulties still abound during Ramadan, especially when it falls in the thick of summer.

"If I'm at home with kids, it's kind of challenging," said Ayse Yegul, a guest and an outreach representative for the [Intercultural Dialogue Institute](http://www.interculturaldialogueinstitute.com), a GTA group that spreads awareness of Islam in Canada. "Sometimes it's hard to follow up their energy. Sometimes I'd rather have a long afternoon sleep with them."

But many at the dinner, including Yegul, said the hardships of an 17-hour fast are insignificant compared to its spiritual rewards.

"There could be some challenges, but those are very minor things," said Khalilov.

His family, Crimean Tatars, immigrated to Canada from Ukraine in 2007. Now their Ramadan celebrations incorporate Toronto's multiculturalism. On Friday, most of their guests were Turkish, and they have eaten *iftar* dinners with non-Muslim Ukrainians since arriving here.

"You don't have any obstacles to communicate with each other. It's a great thing we have in Canada," said Alie Khalilov, Khalil's mother.

"Here, we realize that we're all human beings," said Khalil.

<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/06/21/gta-muslims-look-forward-to-ramadan-even-in-a-difficult-year.html>

thestar.com

COMMENTARY

Opinion / Commentary

Food can be a key to interfaith understanding

There's no better way to learn about a religion than to participate in its sacred act of eating.

By: Dow Marmur Columnist, Published on Sun Jun 21 2015

Religion turns eating into sacred acts. Christians experience it in the Eucharist and, presumably differently, in family events like Christmas dinner. Jews live it in the weekly Sabbath meals and at the Seder that inaugurates the annual Passover festival. In Islam it's the *iftar*, the meal that breaks the fast every night throughout the month of Ramadan. There are corresponding events in other religions.

The holiness of eating is manifest in relationships. The Eucharist is communion. Like Muslims and Jews, Christians experience many family meals as holy events that bring them closer to God and to each other. Temple sacrifices as described in the Hebrew Bible were about that.

Meals in Christian homes can also be occasions for inviting adherents of other faiths. Jewish Sabbath meals and Seder celebrations may include friends and neighbours irrespective of religious affiliation, as does the nightly *iftar* feast of Muslims.

Ramadan began last Thursday. The GTA Intercultural Dialogue Institute is arranging for Torontonians of all faiths and none to join Muslims to break their fast with them. It's a most laudable project that opens up new possibilities for interfaith co-operation. I'm delighted that members of the congregation I served are among the participants.

The spirituality of eating with people across religious divides goes much further than is normally offered at interfaith gatherings, which often consist of discourses about history and theology. These are important in imparting information but it's less clear if they actually bring people closer together. Eating does.

I continue to learn a lot about other religions by reading, meeting their spokespersons and hearing what they have to say. But my most important interfaith encounters are usually around meals.

Eating together also helps us to appreciate why certain foods are forbidden to some, for example pork to Jews and Muslims; why other foods are specific to certain festivals such as unleavened bread (Matzah) on Passover; and why foods that are permitted for most of the year are sometimes out of bounds, such as dietary restrictions in some Christian traditions during Lent.

And then there are the fast days: Ramadan in Islam, several days throughout the year in Judaism and no doubt also in other religions. Some ascetics choose to fast regularly as part of their spiritual exercises.

<http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/06/21/food-can-be-a-key-to-interfaith-understanding.html>



News Coverage

Boy, 6, lauded for saving dad's life

MICHAEL PEAKE, TORONTO SUN

FIRST POSTED: MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2015 02:19 PM EST | UPDATED: MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2015 02:21 PM EST



Arujunpal Khattria, who alerted help when his father Gogi was trapped in a well in November, was honoured with three citations at a youth recognition ceremony at York Regional Police headquarters in Aurora on Monday, January 12, 2015. (Michael Peake/Toronto Sun)

AURORA - Six-year-old Arujunpal Khattria hardly speaks above a whisper but he let his actions do the talking to save his father's life last November.

Clutching three awards for his actions, Arujunpal — facing cameras and microphones — let his grateful father, Gogi Khattria, speak at York Regional Police headquarters Monday.

Two months ago, Arujunpal was waiting in the truck while his dad checked on a property in Markham when Khattria fell through plywood covering an old well.

For four hours Khattria, trapped 7 metres (25 feet) down in waist-deep cold water, cried out for help. Arujunpal, who had fallen asleep in the truck, eventually woke up and went searching for his dad.

After unsuccessfully trying to flag down passing cars in the dark, the boy alerted neighbours, who called emergency services. His father was OK.

"I am as proud as a father can be,"

Khattria said. "He saved my life and is the reason why I am here today."

The youth recognition ceremony was co-sponsored by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute and served as a kickoff to their 2015 Public Heroes Award, where the public nominates emergency service personnel for acts of altruism, dedication and community involvement.

<http://www.torontosun.com/2015/01/12/boy-6-lauded-for-saving-dads-life>



News Coverage



Feature / News

Prominent Toronto Synagogue hosts Iftar

(June 30, 2015) – Holy Blossom Temple, one of Canada's most influential synagogues, hosted an Iftar gathering that brought Muslims and Jews together to learn about each other's traditions of fasting and to share in the fast-breaking meal last Tuesday, June 23.

"I believe that true inter-religious dialogue happens when people study together and, of course, eat together," said Rabbi Michael Satz, Holy Blossom's Associate Rabbi.

The Iftar dinner was co-sponsored by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute, a non-profit organization whose aims are to promote enduring interfaith and intercultural cooperation, tolerance and dialogue.

"This Iftar brings us together tonight for greater understanding and spiritual awareness, and to build relationships," Muneeb Nasir, Executive Director of the Cordoba Centre for Civic Engagement and Leadership, told the gathering.

Founded in 1856, Holy Blossom Temple is Canada's largest Reform synagogue with 7,000 members and the oldest Jewish congregation in Toronto.

A number of distinguished rabbis have led the Reform institution, including the late Gunther Plaut and Dow Marmur, now Rabbi Emeritus.



Earlier in the week, Rabbi Dow Marmur wrote in his Toronto Star column, "The spirituality of eating with people across religious divides goes much further than is normally offered at interfaith gatherings."

"As what we eat and how we eat reflects both culture and religion, the Intercultural Dialogue Institute seems well suited to show us the way," noted Rabbi Mamur. "Its invitation to celebrate Iftar with Muslim friends is, I hope, only a beginning."

Prior to the fast-breaking meal, Rabbi Michael Satz and Muneeb Nasir provided teachings about fasting in their faith traditions.

"The primary purpose of fasting in Islam is to achieve greater consciousness of God, prioritizing God in one's life to achieve greater spiritual awareness," said Muneeb Nasir. "For a month, we take a break from our usual lives – breaking our habits of consumption and interrupting the rhythms of our daily life – to return to meaning and essentials."

<http://iqra.ca/2015/well-known-toronto-synagogue-hosts-iftar/>



Ajax student wins contest with inspiring essay about volunteers

Trip to Turkey among prizes at fifth annual Durham Art and Essay contest

DurhamRegion.com
By Jillian Follert

DURHAM -- A local student says it was her mother's volunteer work that inspired her to write an award-winning essay.

Jessica Watters, 16, recently won first place in the essay category at the fifth annual Durham Art and Essay Contest, organized by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute GTA.

Both her parents volunteer, but Jessica says she was especially moved by the time her mother spent volunteering at her elementary school.

"I've seen how she impacts the students' lives," she says.

On May 20, high school students from four local school boards were recognized for posters and essays they created on the theme "Volunteers - Heroes Among Us."

"I was shocked," Jessica says, of learning she had won.

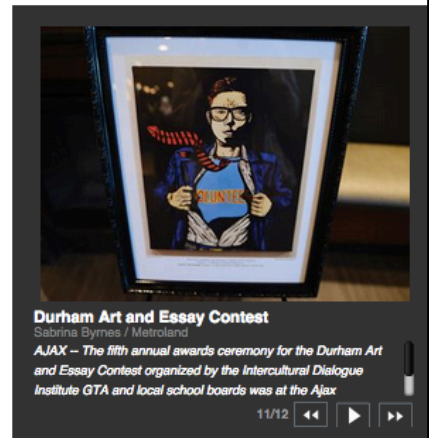
The Grade 10 student at Archbishop Denis O'Connor Catholic High School in Ajax has done her own share of volunteer work too, most recently as a camp counsellor.

She says she loves writing and English class and was excited to take on the essay challenge.

"I wanted people to know why we should appreciate volunteers," she says.

Prizes included a laptop for first-place winners, and tablets or eReaders for second- and third-place winners.

The six top prize winners also receive a semi-sponsored educational trip to Turkey. Jessica says she is hoping to go next summer.



Durham Art and Essay Contest

Sabrina Byrnes / Metroland

AJAX – The fifth annual awards ceremony for the Durham Art and Essay Contest organized by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute GTA and local school boards was at the Ajax

11/12

Reporter Jillian Follert covers the education beat for Metroland Media Group's Durham Region Division.

<http://www.durhamregion.com/news-story/5644824-ajax-student-wins-contest-with-inspiring-essay-about-volunteers/>



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SUPPORT IDI

The IDI is a not-for-profit organization and we would like to thank our supporters for their generous donations. With your help we are promoting tolerance and understanding for a more harmonious society.

We hope for your continued support in the future. Please see our 'donate' page on our website for new and old donations to our work. Thank you!

<http://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/donate/>