



# THE INTERFAITH CENTER OF NEW YORK ANNUAL REPORT 2016



ADVOCATE



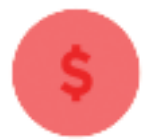
EDUCATE



ORGANIZE



CELEBRATE



DONATE

## A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*While the lofty heights of the Spirit draw our eyes upward and bring to mind church spires, minarets, and temple domes, the Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY) focuses most of our attention at street level. As ICNY enters our 20th year, we can confidently say that few other interfaith organizations in the country have spent more time than we have pounding the pavement of American civic life – advocating, educating, and organizing on a grass-roots level, to help New Yorkers bridge religious divides.*



*The Rev. Chloe Breyer, Executive Director*

As this 2016 Annual Report shows—using graphics from our new website [www.interfaithcenter.org](http://www.interfaithcenter.org)—ICNY’s work to **advocate** has included showing up in funeral parking lots as vocal allies to communities where bias attacks and religious prejudice further complicate the grief of a victim’s families. This year, ICNY’s advocacy work also included delivering testimony to a judge in the Southern District Court supporting a modified settlement to limit suspicion-less spying on Muslim communities by law enforcement.

In this past year, ICNY fulfilled our mission to **educate** by teaching religious diversity not from an ivory tower, but from the steps the Ganesh Temple in Queens and from the lovely garden of the “Bronx Lourdes” grotto. For the third time, our partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities and Union Theological Seminary brought public, private, and parochial school teachers together from across the country to New York City, to learn how to teach about religious diversity from street level. And our new religious diversity training video, “Policing in Today’s Multi-Faith New York” will be screened for officers from all levels of the NYPD beginning this fall and shown to a wider audience at One Police Plaza in November.

And finally, ICNY continues to **organize**—bringing together diverse youth across the city to share their concerns about religious identity in an increasingly intolerant world at our recent Rabbi Marshall Meyer Retreat “Youth Speak Out,” and working closely with Latino/a Catholics and Bangladeshi Muslims in the Bronx.

All of this street level advocacy, education, and organizing takes time, energy, and money. And this is where the rubber really meets the road. We need your support. Please donate this year for all that ICNY has done the past two decades – and for all that we will do in the many decades to come.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of The Rev. Chloe Breyer.

The Rev. Chloe Breyer  
Executive Director

Handwritten signature of The Very Rev. Jim Morton.

The Very Rev. Jim Morton  
Founder and Chair Emeritus



# ADVOCATE

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

As part of our ongoing advocacy work for religious freedom, ICNY organized letter-writing and education during the 2016 public comment period on the Handschu/Raza settlement between the NYPD and Muslim New Yorkers. Muslim New Yorker's rights were violated by spying and undercover work done on mosques and Muslim student groups over the past decade. ICNY's statement urged the judge on this case to affirm the proposed settlement while taking further strengthening steps. ICNY hosted informational sessions with civil rights attorney Martin Stolar on Handschu/ Raza settlement so that communities of faith could weigh in on the proposed settlement.



*Faith Leaders call for religious freedom and police accountability on the steps of City Hall.*

## FIGHTING BIAS CRIMES AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

According to the Bridge Initiative at Georgetown University, bias attacks against Muslims surged in Dec. 2015 and have continued at higher than pre-9/11 rates in 2016. In New York this summer, when Imam Maulama Akonjee (55) and his associate Thara Uddin (64) were killed outside of the mosque that they serve in Queens, ICNY attended the Janazah (funeral ceremony). In addition, we publicized a fundraising effort by the Majlis Ashura of New York to raise over \$84k for their bereaved families. The Court has not yet ruled that this attack was a hate crime.

- In June, ICNY submitted written testimony to the US Senate Judiciary Committee questioning the premise of hearings organized by Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) titled, "Willful Blindness —The Consequences of Agency Efforts to De-Emphasize Radical Islam in Combating Terrorism."
- In May, Muslim Advocates and fifteen allied organizations (including ICNY) filed an amicus brief in support of a New Jersey Muslim community whose proposal to build a mosque was rejected by the Township of Bernards. The Islamic Society of Basking Ridge (ISBR) argued that the Township used one standard for churches, and a different and more stringent standard for the mosque.
- During Thanksgiving weekend of 2015, 40 Jhandi flags were burned in the front yard of a local Hindu home in Woodhaven, Queens. Jhandi flags are an emblematic identifier of many Indo-Caribbean homes, and this act of vandalism could have been seen as an attack not just against Hindus, but Indo-Caribbeans at large. In response, ICNY worked with Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus on a vigil against hatred and bigotry.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

Back in 2013, ICNY joined other community and civil rights organizations to sign an amicus brief on behalf of the plaintiffs in the landmark "Stop-and-Frisk" case, *Floyd et al vs. City of New York et al*. In 2016, ICNY was invited to sit on the community advisory board for the court-appointed facilitator of this case. ICNY is a member of Communities United for Police Reform (CPR) and is working on a leadership forum to give community feedback to the *Floyd* case legal facilitator.



# EDUCATE

New York has long been the “promised city” for new Americans from every corner of the globe and every faith tradition. But despite this rich religious diversity, most New Yorkers have little or no understanding of their neighbors’ faith traditions. The dangers of this widespread religious illiteracy have been all too clear in recent years, as a disturbing wave of religious bigotry and xenophobia has swept through American politics, media, and public life.



*Educators participating in the July 2016 NEH Summer Institute: Religious Worlds of New York.*

## Religious World Institute

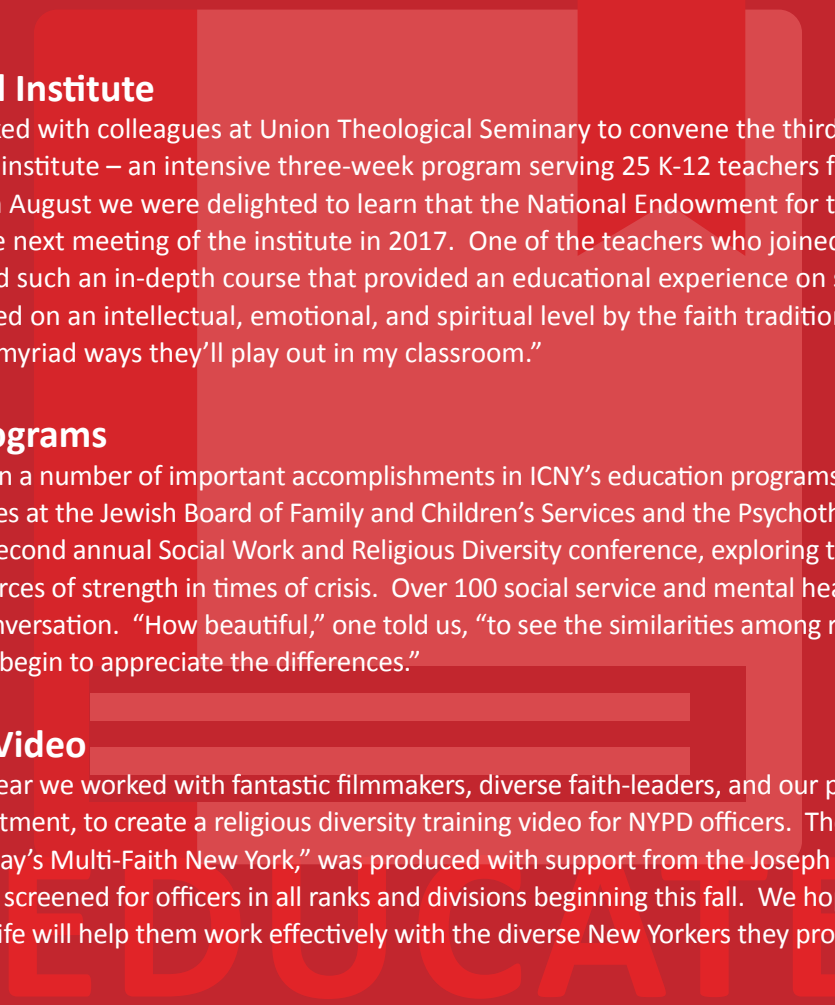
In July 2016, we worked with colleagues at Union Theological Seminary to convene the third Religious Worlds of New York summer institute – an intensive three-week program serving 25 K-12 teachers from throughout the United States. And in August we were delighted to learn that the National Endowment for the Humanities has agreed to support the next meeting of the institute in 2017. One of the teachers who joined us this summer wrote, “I’ve never had such an in-depth course that provided an educational experience on so many levels! I have been transformed on an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual level by the faith traditions we studied, and I can’t wait to see the myriad ways they’ll play out in my classroom.”

## Social Work Programs

This past year has seen a number of important accomplishments in ICNY’s education programs. In April 2016, we worked with colleagues at the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services and the Psychotherapy and Spirituality Institute to hold the second annual Social Work and Religious Diversity conference, exploring the roles of religion and spirituality as sources of strength in times of crisis. Over 100 social service and mental health care providers joined the full-day conversation. “How beautiful,” one told us, “to see the similarities among religious traditions, and how profound to begin to appreciate the differences.”

## NYPD Training Video

Over the course of the year we worked with fantastic filmmakers, diverse faith-leaders, and our partners in the New York City Police Department, to create a religious diversity training video for NYPD officers. The twenty-minute video, “Policing in Today’s Multi-Faith New York,” was produced with support from the Joseph and Sylvia Slifka Foundation. It will be screened for officers in all ranks and divisions beginning this fall. We hope an understanding of the city’s religious life will help them work effectively with the diverse New Yorkers they protect and serve.





# ORGANIZE

Cultivating an interfaith community can be challenging in the midst of New York City's discreet metropolitan silos. But connecting diverse groups to one another in today's world is a vital ingredient to enhancing healthy, sustainable urban environments. Interfaith organizing and community-building efforts foster dynamic conversations about differences and similarities in fast-paced international environments like NYC. Connecting people to different ideas and ways of life in a safe and respectful space can cultivate understanding and build mutual respect.



*Imam Tahir of the Albanian Cultural Center hosts a good-bye party celebrating the ministry of Fr. Liam O' Dorhety of Our Lady of Good Council. July 2016.*

## Circles of Support for Reentry

In 2016, The Interfaith Center of New York and the Harlem Community Justice Center continued their fruitful partnership with Harlem faith communities to support parolees between the ages of 18-26, and their families, before and after release from New York State correctional facilities. Harlem congregations and houses of worship have been invited to offer family-oriented activities, services, and referrals to provide the parolees with a smoother return to society, and to support family reintegration. We anticipate that support networks created through this project will additionally serve other Harlem residents returning home from experiences of incarceration. This reentry partnership is funded by the JC Flowers Foundation and Episcopal Charities.

## Marshall Meyer Retreat for Social Justice

Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer Retreat for Social Justice - The July 7, 2016 Youth Speak Out conference was the 32nd Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer Retreat for Social Justice, The Interfaith Center of New York's flagship program for local community leaders. This year's was for the leaders of tomorrow – young New Yorkers, age 14 to 24, of all religious or secular backgrounds. It was held at the historic Ganesh Temple in Queen, New York. Some 75 youth participants from different religions classes, ages, and walks of life learned about each other as they shared their own experiences relating to diversity and xenophobia.

## Catholic-Muslim Dialogue and Partnership

Islam and Christianity have rich traditions of social service, community action, and interfaith work. Drawing upon these commonalities, and funded by the GHR Foundation, the Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY) initiated a project in 2010 to build collaboration between Catholic and Muslim service providers in New York City: The Catholic-Muslim Joint Action Initiative. Seeking to translate the ideals of A Common Word into action, ICNY has worked to foster partnerships between Catholic and Muslim social service providers in three boroughs of New York City (Bronx, Staten Island, and Manhattan). While the projects differed from each other, all shared two common features: (a) they incorporated dialogue on Catholic and Muslim teachings and community life, and (2) they all built collaboration around specific social service needs in each borough.



# CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF ICNY



1998 First ICNY Interfaith Prayer Service to honor the opening of the General Assembly of the United Nations.



2002 Buddhist Priest and former ICNY Vice President Rev. Dr. T.K. Nakagaki starts annual Floating Lanterns Ceremony to remember lives lost in the 9/11 attacks.



2004 ICNY honors women's cultural contributions to Interfaith work with events like Nayika's Dancing the Goddess and Heavenly Sex with Dr. Ruth.

1997

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2001

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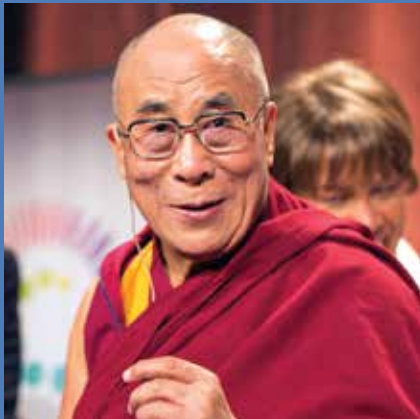
2004

2005

2006

2000 ICNY co-sponsored week long Millennium Interfaith Peace Conference with the UN and 1,000 religious leaders worldwide; launched Muslims of NY Initiative

2006 JPM receives The Urban Angel Award from NY Theological Seminary; ICNY starts a program in religious diversity for social workers co-sponsored by UJA, Catholic Charities of NY and Columbia University's School of Social Work.



1997 The Interfaith Center and the Temple of Understanding honor HH The XIV Dalai Lama, Ravi Shankar, and The Hon. Mary Robinson.



2001 ICNY becomes an information center for Muslims and Sikhs after the 9/11 attacks. Aisha al-Adawiya speaks at a press conference at ICNY on 9/14/2011.



2005 Ven. Maha Ghosananda, Dean Morton, and friends lead a silent procession through the Christo and Jean Claude's "Gates Project" in Central Park.

The **Interfaith Center of New York** works to overcome prejudice, violence, and misunderstanding by activating the power of the city's grassroots religious and civic leaders and their communities.



2008 ICNY co-sponsors the 9/11 Unity Walk from Battery Park to the World Trade Center.



2011 Sarah Sayeed participates in 'Prepare New York', a city-wide interfaith education initiative leading up to the 10th Anniversary of 9/11.



2014 Rev. Al Sharpton and Imam Al-Hajj Talib 'Abdur-Rashid celebrate MLK Jr Day at an interfaith service that grew out of the ICNY Catholic Muslim Joint Action Initiative.

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016



2009 ICNY International Sister Cities Initiative includes interfaith delegations from Barcelona, Spain and Glasgow, Scotland.



2011 ICNY honors Wynton Marsalis with the JPM Award at the Tribeca Rooftop.

2016 ICNY works with the NYPD to produce a short training video titled "Policing in Today's Multi-Faith New York."

2010 Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer honors ICNY for preserving diversity and strengthening NYC's religious community.



2015 ICNY and the Diocese of Brooklyn worked to bring diverse religious leaders to join Pope Francis for an interfaith prayer service at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York.

# ICNY 2015-2016 DONORS

## Gifts \$100,000 and above

Ms. Barbara Slifka & The Joseph and  
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## Gifts \$30,000 to \$99,000

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## Gifts \$10,000 to \$29,000

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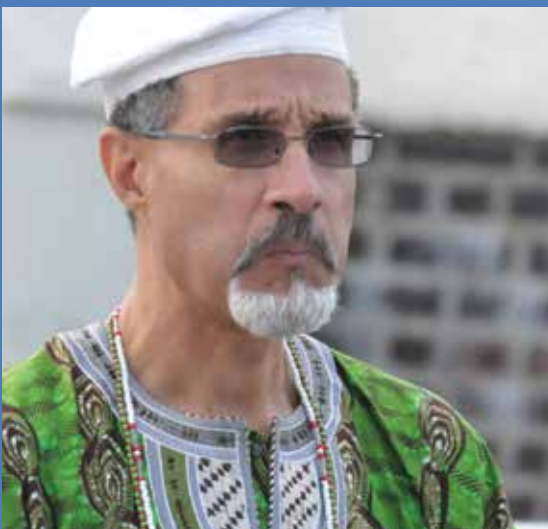
*From left to right: The Most Rev. James Massa, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn; Sister Tesa Fitzgerald, founder of Hour Children; The Rev. Chloe Breyer; and Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Executive Vice Chair, NY Board of Rabbis. Herb Frischner and Dr. Kusumita Pedersen, ICNY Board Co-Chair.*



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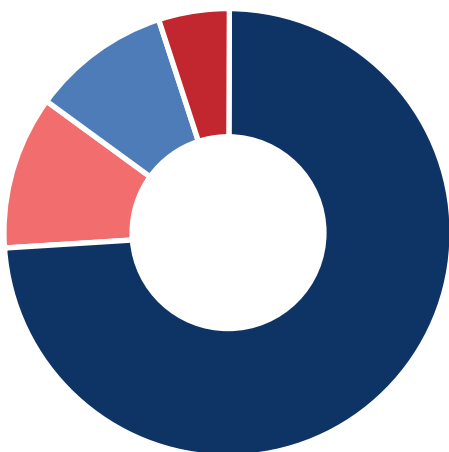
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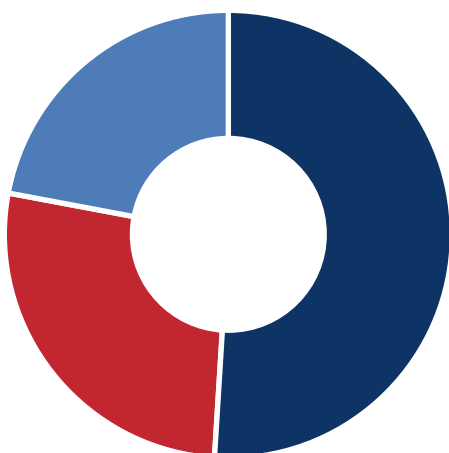
# ICNY 2015-2016 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## FISCAL YEAR 2016 REVENUE



|  |                  |             |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| ■ Contributions & Grants               | \$566,512        | 74%         |
| ■ Contract Revenue                     | 86,538           | 11%         |
| ■ In-Kind Contributions                | 74,195           | 10%         |
| ■ Program Fees, Special Events & Misc. | 34,950           | 5%          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           | <b>\$762,195</b> | <b>100%</b> |

## FISCAL YEAR 2016 EXPENDITURES



|                  |                  |             |
|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| ■ Programs       | \$441,862        | 51%         |
| ■ Fundraising    | 230,555          | 27%         |
| ■ Administration | 193,497          | 22%         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>\$865,914</b> | <b>100%</b> |

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*Connecting Religions, Building Peace*