

**Dr. Diana Eck, Founder and Director, The Pluralism Project
2021 Recipient of the James Parks Morton Interfaith Award**



Eck is a native of Montana and has now taught at Harvard since 1976. She is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and Frederic Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society at Harvard University. She serves in the Departments of Religion and South Asian Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and is also a member of Faculty of Divinity. For twenty years, Professor Eck was Faculty Dean of Lowell House, one of Harvard's twelve undergraduate residential Houses. She received her B.A. from Smith College (1967) in Religion, her M.A. from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (1968) in South Asian History, and her Ph.D. from Harvard University (1976) in the Comparative Study of Religion.

Since 1991, Diana Eck has been heading a research team at Harvard University to explore the new religious diversity of the United States and its meaning for the American pluralist experiment. The Pluralism Project has been documenting the growing presence of the Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Pagan, Sikh, Jain, and Zoroastrian communities in the U.S. and their encounter with American Christian, Jewish, and secular traditions. This research project has involved students and professors at Harvard and in a dozen affiliate colleges and universities. In 1994, Diana Eck and the Pluralism Project published *World Religions in Boston, A Guide to Communities and Resources*. The Pluralism Project's interactive CD-ROM, *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*, a multimedia introduction to the world's religions in the American context, was published in

1997 by Columbia University Press. It has won major awards from Media & Methods, EdPress, and Educom.

In 1996, Diana L. Eck was appointed to a State Department Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, a twenty-member commission charged with advising the Secretary of State on enhancing and protecting religious freedom in the overall context of human rights. In 1998, Eck received the National Humanities Medal from President Clinton and the National Endowment for the Humanities for her work on American religious pluralism. In 2002, she received the American Academy of Religion Martin Marty Award for the Public Understanding of Religion. In 2003, she received the Governor's Humanities Award from the Montana Council for the Humanities in her home state of Montana. In 2005-06 Diana Eck served as President of the American Academy of Religion. In 2009, she delivered the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh.

Diana's teaching has taken a turn toward the case-method, using Pluralism Project cases in her General Education course on Ethics and Civics. She also continues to teach courses in religion and South Asian Studies.

Professor Eck's work on India includes the books ***India: A Sacred Geography*** (Random House, Inc. 2012), ***Banaras, City of Light*** (Knopf 1982), and ***Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*** (Anima 1981; Columbia University Press 1996). With Devaki Jain, she edited ***Speaking of Faith: Global Perspectives on Women, Religion, and Social Change***, a book that emerged from a jointly planned interfaith women's conference. With Francoise Mallison, she edited ***Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India***, essays honoring the French Indology scholar Charlotte Vaudeville.

Diana Eck's book, ***Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*** (Beacon Press, 1993), studies the question of religious difference in the context of Christian theology and the comparative study of religion. It addresses issues of Christian faith in a world of many faiths and, more broadly, the issues of religious diversity that challenge people of every faith. *Encountering God* won the 1994 Melcher Book Award of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the 1995 Louisville Grawemeyer Book Award in Religion, given for work that reflects a significant breakthrough in our understanding of religion.

Diana Eck's book, ***A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*** (Harper San Francisco 2001) addresses the challenges for the United States of the more complex religious landscape of the post-1965 period of renewed immigration.