

Think Peace Media and Communications CC

THINK PEACE INTERNATIONAL

Faiths /Traditions Represented: Jewish, Christian Catholic, Neopagan, Islam Muslim, Buddhist, Quaker, Christian Protestant, Ananda Marga

Location of CC: The Think Peace Media and Communications CC is a Multiregion CC, with its main office in Houston under the name of Think Peace International. However, members of the CC are in Asia, SE Asia/Pacific, Europe, Africa, America, Central America and The Middle East.

Key Areas of Focus: Media and Communications CC to help tell the stories in our regions of interfaith, intercultural and intergenerational narratives through mixed media platforms; TPI is a non-profit made up of artists, educators and social activists collaborating to build cultures of peace, justice and healing for the world.

Summary:

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As a CC, we work to build bridges across our network at URI, providing expertise in media and communications work to those who need support in these areas. Peace work is an encompassing endeavor and the stories are vast from continent to continent. Communities of people working together for various issues such as conflict and environmental problems often lack the support to tell those stories in a context that will enable them to also be a part of the solution, receive support and resources, and to educate and inspire others to the same.

We provide methods by which to tell the stories that include workshops, providing resources such as video equipment, and events that provide inspiration and training in areas of peacemaking. We created a photography competition that continues to exhibit across the globe; an annual International Day of Peace (IDP) event, including our first annual week-long IDP series of cross-cultural and cross-generational work; an Elders in Partnership Movement, which provides support to cross-generational endeavors; Support to multiregion CCs with marketing, PR and graphic design; editing video and film; Podcasts and special video events.

We have become a presence in communities through social media and in person working with other peacemaking organizations, educational institutions, and providing guidance to political leaders in times of conflict and misunderstandings. Through TPI, we worked on responding to the South Carolina tragedy through interfaith gatherings. The members of TPI are interfaith-committed in the work that we do. However, we add cultural and generational methods to that work.

CC Profile Questionnaire:

- 1. What is the current religious/cultural/social context in the area where your CC is working?**
Our work is interreligious, intercultural and intergenerational. We work across platforms of various social constructs in various areas of the world. Our goal is to build relationships across these structures and to insure that nonviolence and its methods are at the core of everything we do.

2. **Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed in the area where your CC works?**
Bridge building is needed in every area of the globe. Working with people of different faiths and cultures ensures that we leave no one out.
3. **Please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is carrying out. Please specify the year in which the activity took/is taking place.**
Our endeavor is to work collaboratively with other organizations with the mission of being able to fully present the narratives that can help change the world for the better. However, our work currently is an initiative called Our House by Artists utilizing a curriculum called ICDesign. “I” stands for Improving and “C” for Changing structures that hinder our being able to live and work together.
4. **Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?**
We work with practitioners of more than 20 religions, including those who profess no religion or faith.
5. **Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that generally do not engage or cooperate with each other.**
We utilize art in its various forms, including, but not limited to visual art, music and dance, but most effectively through conversations which are recorded to use at later times.
6. **Why do the activities your CC is carrying out improve cooperation among people of different traditions in the broader community?**
We are sacred space and a willing listening space for those who wish to participate in our endeavors and those of others. We work to become the Beloved Community.
7. **Within your CC, you have members from several different faiths and cultural traditions. How would you describe cooperation among your CC’s members? Have there been any challenges?**
Since 2008, when our CC began in earnest, the organizers were seasoned individuals in interfaith. However, since our inception, our interfaith alliances have grown tremendously, also making us known as individuals and the group to respond to issues of crisis and misunderstanding. Our challenge is that not everyone identifies as religious, but it has not hampered us from the development, creation, and implementation of programs that support interfaith endeavors. We are multi-generational, which is a strong component of our work and our relationships.
8. **What are some observations or signs you see that relations are improving between people of different faiths/cultures in the area where your CC works?**
Our work is not without its challenges as stated above, but the signs that people are willing to overcome their issues of faith- of xenophobia especially- come from building relationships through various collaborations on issues that are important. People are ready. From environmental issues and justice concerns to more specific issues such as Black Lives Matter, the Syrian Refugee Crisis, or immigration in general, we are finding that when people learn of each other, relationships are strengthened. When they learn to build bridges across issues that don’t directly affect them, but affect their neighbors, peace is forged and stands against the tyranny that threatens us every day. However, one of the greatest challenges is to root out those things that hinder us *within* our organization (racism, sexism, ageism and the list goes on). We have a responsibility to address those issues posthaste when they affect our CCs.
9. **What does your CC hope to achieve?**
Easily: world peace. It’s not something we aim to achieve in the utopian manner, but in creating genuine respectful, honest and ethical relationships that pass the test of intentionality and intersectionality—building relationships that survive conflict because of the LOVE we generate when we come to know one another.

10. Aside from funding, what are some specific ways URI can better support your CC in reaching its goals?

The programs and events we've created are important. 1000Kalema is one of those and it is our hope that exhibitions of this timely event- where an African American woman mentors a Middle Eastern man, finds conflicts, solves conflict and creates an exhibition that can stir conversations and inspire others- should be seen at major events throughout the 90 plus countries we impact.

11. As you know, the Purpose of URI is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings. How does your work fit in with this purpose?

Every day is an opportunity to fulfill the purpose of URI, using its principles, vision and mission in order to achieve it. It is the hope of TPI to continue to find unique and inventive ways to achieve this.

12. What value or benefits does your CC receive from being a member of URI?

At this point, we are still building and deepening relationships that have endured two decades. We will continue to do so.

13. What value or benefit does your CC currently provide or could potentially provide the URI network?

By working through the difficulties and remaining committed to the PPPs, we make it easier for other CCs to never think about giving up.

14. Do you communicate or work with other CCs in the URI network? If yes, please share a few examples. If no, please explain why you have been unable/ uninterested to connect with other CCs.

Our work regularly has us working with other CCs within the URI network.

15. As a CC that works on improving interfaith relations, perhaps you have seen, heard, or experienced something interesting. Please share a very important personal experience or lesson related to interfaith/intercultural relations that changed impacted your beliefs OR a story about something that happened in your community related to interfaith relations.

One? There are many. We have provided a wealth of opportunity for others through the work that we do, but I guess the story that remains one of our favorites is before we became a CC and URI was in its infancy. During an interfaith gathering a group of young men came to disturb the events with their narrow assumption that Christianity was the only way to serve God. While it was disturbing, a group of us did our best to talk to the men, but it was the affects afterwards. Those individuals are still working to solve the issues in the world that continue to separate us. It is no longer an idea, but a way of life for us. WE ARE URI.