



UNITY EARTH network showcases United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week in New York City

Growing collective of organizations and leaders working to engage civil society, youth and First Nation communities in UN-backed initiatives for unity and peace

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UNITY EARTH, an emerging global network of groups and individuals working together for unity and peace, recently completed a groundbreaking series of events in New York City designed to engage civil society in celebration of the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week. Building upon successful gatherings in Ethiopia, Australia and Canada, the series brought together a UNITY EARTH delegation of peacemakers, interfaith and faith-based leaders, indigenous elders, academics and musicians for a week of public engagements and community outreach.

After visiting an urban high school to inspire youth with a message of cross-cultural collaboration and a call to leadership in the world, the series continued with the *New York Convergence*, a strategic development conference that brought together over 100 organizational leaders, event producers and more to generate increased cohesion and capacity within the UNITY EARTH Network and co-design elements of the UNITY EARTH *Road to 2020* event series.

Highlighting the week was the UNITY EARTH *Lift Off*, a four-hour showcase of peace and unity at the historic United Palace in Washington Heights. Featuring a diverse line-up of performers and esteemed speakers, the concert and live broadcast was a powerful nexus of culture, creativity, and inspirational stories woven together to celebrate our common humanity. Guest speakers included Jonathan Granoff (Global Security Institute), Amb. Mussie Hailu (United Religions Initiative), Audrey Kitagawa (Parliament of the World's Religions), Dr. Mindahi Bastida (Center for Earth Ethics), Syed Salman Chishty (India), Sister Jenna (USA) and many more.

The UNITY EARTH delegation was additionally invited to visit the Ramapough-Lenape First Nations community for an opportunity to participate in a time of cultural exchange and connection featuring traditional ceremony led by local elders in collaboration with Hereditary Dakota Chief Phil Lane Jr. The delegation also visited Philadelphia to honor the legacy of Sufi master Hazret Bawa Muhaiyedeen to complete a week of diverse cultural interaction and collaboration.

The week was designed as a catalyst for the UNITY EARTH *Road to 2020* event series, with the delegation turning to India in November for a 12 day multi-city tour and celebration of interfaith harmony, before embarking on a journey to Jerusalem, Palestine and Jordan for United National World Interfaith Harmony Week in February 2020. In September 2020, the series culminates in the *Caravan of Unity Across America*, a never-before-seen touring showcase of peace and unity beginning in San Francisco and ending in New York City on the International Day of Peace.

By connecting with increasingly large and diverse groups of communities and individuals through events, media and outreach, UNITY EARTH aims to support the work of the United Nations, using innovative methods and models to unlock the potential for civil society - and youth in particular - to further the Sustainable Development Goals and other UN initiatives.

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I wish I was physically present with you today to thank all the co-sponsors for inviting me to participate in this event to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week in New York. This week is a very important moment, not only for the United Nations, but everywhere in the world. Events are held in numerous countries to honor religious diversity and interfaith dialogue as essential elements to peaceful and inclusive societies. The UNITY EARTH *Lift Off* event is of relevance as it celebrates our common humanity despite our differences.

- Adama Dieng, UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide

It is a great pleasure for United Religions Initiative (URI) to join hands with UNITY EARTH on the occasion of the celebration of the 2019 World Interfaith Harmony Week on the event of UNITY EARTH LIFT OFF that brought together indigenous leaders, musicians, diplomats, artists, scientists, peace activists, interfaith and faith-based organization representatives along with youth, women and guests of all ages to stand together as unified beacons of hope that yearns for justice, healing, peace, compassion, harmony and the preservation of Mother Earth.

World Interfaith Harmony Week celebrates the principles of love they neighbour, tolerance and respect for the other which help to promote unity in diversity and peaceful co-existence. One practical guiding principle which help to promote a culture of peace, unity in diversity, human dignity and world interfaith harmony is the teaching of the Golden Rule which says "Treat others the way you want to be treated" as it is common shared value to all creeds and deeply rooted in the world's different religions, faiths and beliefs.

- Amb. Mussie Hailu, United Religions Initiative (URI) Director of Global Partnership and Representative to the African Union & UN

UNITY EARTH's celebration in New York for UN World Interfaith Harmony Week was a beautiful tapestry of events. Visiting dignitaries from around the world joined local artists and communities for the pinnacle event of UNITY EARTH LIFT OFF at United Palace on Saturday February 2nd. This event was interfaith, multicultural and intergenerational and all the acts and presentations inspired hope and optimism, amidst the many challenges the global community currently faces. UNITY EARTH thanks all our wonderful Partners including in the UN NGO Community and we look forward to increased collaboration UN agencies as we walk together The Road to 2020, fostering together increasingly peaceful and just communities around the world.

- Ben Bowler, Executive Director, UNITY EARTH

I commend the organizers of UNITY EARTH for convening such a rich and potent gathering of intertwining lives moving together through the power of our hearts to manifest culture, arts, music, film and speeches in a symphony of goodwill, harmony and joy. The experience served as a remembrance of the creativity of our inherent inner potential to bring forth sublime beauty while simultaneously having transcendence that returns us to the ground of sacred being from which we all arise.

- Audrey Kitagawa, Chair, Parliament of the World's Religions



UNITY EARTH visit to the High School for Excellence and Innovation in Washington Heights, NY



First Nations youth leader Lyla June Johnston shares a message of culture and empowerment



Representatives from UNITY EARTH, URI and UNCSVGC at the New York Convergence



Deborah Moldow and colleagues at the UNITY EARTH New York Convergence



First Nations elders welcome guests to the UNITY EARTH Lift Off concert and live broadcast



Queen Mother Dr Delois Blakeley in the crowd at the UNITY EARTH Lift Off



Ambassador Mussie Hailu (United Religions Initiative) at the UNITY EARTH Lift Off



Jonathan Granoff (Global Security Institute) greets Pato Banton at the UNITY EARTH Lift Off



UNITY EARTH international cultural delegation visit to Ramapough-Lenape First Nations community



Hereditary Dakota Chief Phil Lane Jr with Ramapough Chief Dwaine Perry and Syed Salman Chishty