Interfaith America

Building Toward the Next Twenty Years

2022 Annual Report
Dear Friends,

This past year was one marked by change and celebration. In May 2022, we inaugurated a new name – Interfaith America – that represents our expanding mission, vision, and scope of work. As Interfaith America, we are embracing our role as the leading interfaith institution in the United States. We believe that religious diversity is a foundational American strength, and together with partners like you we are building a nation that achieves that promise for the common good.

In September, President Biden affirmed our vision as he announced one of our newest initiatives – the Team Up Project – during the United We Stand Summit at the White House. In partnership with Catholic Charities, Habitat for Humanity, and the YMCA of the USA, Interfaith America is supporting local leaders to carry out projects that bridge across deep divides and unite people with their neighbors to serve their communities. This is just one of many new initiatives that Interfaith America has created to unlock the potential of America’s religious diversity.

This new chapter in our organization’s history builds on the past twenty years of programs advancing religious pluralism on college campuses across the nation. Over two decades, Interfaith America has grown from a small group of young people launching a big idea to a vital civic institution. In October, we were grateful to gather with friends and supporters at our 20th anniversary gala event in Chicago to reflect on this milestone and envision what lies ahead for our organization and our country.

This report highlights Interfaith America’s work in 2022, including new initiatives that we launched and longstanding programs that we continue to grow. None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the many foundations, corporations, families, and individuals who walk alongside us to achieve our vision. Thank you for being with us on this journey, and for your continued support as we build toward the next twenty years.

In Gratitude,

Eboo Patel
Founder and President

Toni Clark
Chair, Board of Directors
Inside this Report

Highlights from 2022

- Highlights from 2022
- Inspiring Hope in Our Diverse Democracy
- Vote is Sacred
- Black Interfaith Project
- Interfaith America Media
- Equipping Leaders to Make an Impact
- Interfaith Leadership Summit
- Faith and Health Grants
- Emerging Leaders Network
- Connecting Communities Across Differences
- Bridging the Gap
- Interfaith HIV/AIDS Capacity Building Grants
- Civic Bridgebuilding
- Interfaith America 20th Anniversary
- Our Supporters

Financial information for Interfaith America can be found in the FY22 Audited Financial Statements here: FY22 Audited Financial Statements

Highlights from 2022:

- **CAMPUS**
  - 493 campuses making institutional change around interfaith engagement
  - 260 grants made to individuals conducting interfaith initiatives on their campuses

- **NARRATIVE**
  - 132 campuses represented at the first in-person Interfaith Leadership Summit since 2019
  - 40+ campuses reached through Bridging the Gap
  - 500+ articles published on Interfaith America Magazine
  - 10,000 downloads of the new Interfaith America with Eboo Patel podcast
  - 2,100+ members of the Emerging Leaders Network

- **INNOVATION**
  - 10 Vote is Sacred campus grants awarded in the pilot year
  - 500+ learners enrolled in new Foundations of Interfaith Leadership online course
  - 250 attendees at the Black Interfaith convening at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture
  - 21 campuses conducting HIV/AIDS stigma reduction projects in the Southeastern United States

Mission

Interfaith America’s mission is to inspire, equip, and connect leaders and institutions to unlock the potential of America’s religious diversity.

Vision

Religious diversity is a foundational American strength. Interfaith America is building a nation that achieves that promise for the common good.

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Watch: “We Need to Build an Interfaith America”
Interfaith America (IA) inspires leaders to mobilize across lines of difference around issues of common concern. We believe that we all belong, not just as invited guests, but as co-creators of this great American experiment. Our comprehensive narrative and programmatic efforts elevate new voices and provide prominent platforms for positive, productive conversations. We are constantly seeking to better understand, advance, and share new and effective models for building bridges across differences.

Vote is Sacred

Vote is Sacred is IA’s national, transpartisan civic engagement initiative that activates the social capital of higher education and faith communities to underscore the centrality of the vote in a religiously diverse, participatory government.

In July 2022, IA awarded grants to a pilot cohort of ten campuses to support student-centered projects advancing the right to vote on campuses and in local communities. Campus teams of students, staff, faculty, and administrators carried out a wide variety of activities to articulate the connection between faith traditions and participatory democracy, increase voter registration and turnout, and empower student leaders to promote interfaith cooperation and civic engagement.

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

Student leaders at Livingstone College (Salisbury, NC) designed a six-phase program to conduct voter awareness and mobilization on campus and in their local community. Activities included student and advisor training utilizing IA’s Vote is Sacred learning materials; voter registration events during first-year students’ orientation and at school football and volleyball games; public forum events featuring local candidates coupled with voter registration drives; transportation for students to take part in early voting; and a coordinated “march-to-vote” on election day.

READ: “On a Historic Black Campus, a Passionate Call to North Carolina Voters” by Michael Gilyard, Student at Livingstone College

Throughout the year, IA also hosted multiple virtual webinars to engage a broader audience in exploring how voting is rooted in diverse faith traditions and practical ways those traditions can come together to protect our democracy.
Black Interfaith Project

Through a fellowship program, public events, and learning resources, the Black Interfaith Project explores how interfaith efforts that emerge out of diverse Black spaces contribute to the formation of the United States as a religiously diverse democracy.

The cornerstone of the project is the inaugural cohort of 20 Black Interfaith Fellows. These early-career and established professionals represent a wide range of sectors and worldviews and are engaged in interfaith bridgebuilding. IA facilitates virtual and in-person opportunities for the Fellows to learn from one another and financially supports their interfaith projects.

FELLOW SPOTLIGHT

Naila Ansari is the Founder, Researcher, and Lead Artist of The Movement of Joy, and an inaugural Black Interfaith Fellow. The Movement of Joy, supported through the Fellowship, is a digital project and book focusing on the performance of joy through the creative archiving of oral histories, social movement histories, live-performance, and film. Naila’s performance pieces capture how Black women from all faith and spiritual backgrounds choreograph their joy, transforming those stories into dance, fine arts, documentary film, song, and poetry.


Interfaith America Media

IA’s media platforms amplify religiously diverse voices and tell stories about people working together for the public good. Our stories include a call to action, providing both the motivation and the resources to build interfaith cooperation and turn the bridging potential of religion into reality.

In 2022, the redesigned Interfaith America Magazine published more than 500 pieces, including 250+ original stories from IA staff, program participants, members of the IA Emerging Leaders Network, and guest columnists on the role of religious diversity in American civic life. The Magazine welcomed seven new Senior Columnists to the team in July, who have contributed essays about American civic life from a range of worldviews and faith perspectives. And in September, in partnership with Religion News Service (RNS), IA selected the second cohort of four emerging journalists for the Religion Journalism Fellowship Program.

In November 2022, IA partnered with the National Museum of African American History and Culture to host a convening for nearly 250 attendees. “Celebrating Black Interfaith” was an immersive experience that began with a video welcome from Harvard University historian Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. followed by remarks and presentations by special guests. These included Shayla Harris and Stacey Holman, directors and producers of the PBS series Making Black America and documentary The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song. They spoke to the significance of creating space for accurate and expansive Black storytelling that centers joy and hope.

READ: “Celebrating Black Joy and Interfaith Stories” by Silma Suba, IA Editor

READ: “Four Fellows Accepted to RNS-Interfaith America 2022-2023 Fellowship Program”

READ: “Celebrating Black Joy and Interfaith Stories” by Silma Suba, IA Editor
In October 2022, as a complement to our written narrative efforts, IA launched a new podcast: *Interfaith America with Eboo Patel*. Each of the 12 episodes of Season 1 explore the question, “How does our religious understanding of the world inform the ways we live and work together?” Guests include author David Brooks, Shirley Hoogstra, president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, John a. powell, Director of the Othering & Belonging Institute at the University of California, Berkeley, and award-winning radio host Krista Tippett. We provided discussion guides and awarded grant funds to campus and emerging leaders to encourage listeners to reflect and converse with others about key themes.

Listen: “*Interfaith America with Eboo Patel*”

*“It was really moving to hear my [friends] open up about their [family’s] religious traditions and how they’re either discovering it in a new way or seeking something else. We talked about how our culture shapes our stories and how we are part of something so much bigger than ourselves when we dig into our stories. Eboo is incredibly skillful at holding discussions that honor all points of view and allow for tension to exist while still moving forward. This is a skill that I everyone should try to cultivate, especially Gen. Z as we step into our careers and leadership!”*

— ISABELLA WEIK, MEMBER OF THE IA EMERGING LEADERS NETWORK, AND RECIPIENT OF A PODCAST ENGAGEMENT AWARD

Top-read essays from the past year include:

*“In Today’s Political Arena, White Evangelicals Aren’t the Big Story”*
by IA Senior Columnist Musa al-Gharbi, Paul F. Lazarsfeld Fellow in Sociology, Columbia University

*“No Safe Spaces: My Faith Demands We Face the Facts About Gun Violence”*
by Jenan Mohajir, IA Senior Director of Special Projects

*“How ‘Nones’ are Building Spaces with Creativity and Vision”*
by IA Sacred Journey Fellow Katie Gordon, Co-Founder and National Organizer with Nuns & Nones

*“How ‘Vacation Interfaith School’ Helped Build Connections in Maryland”*
by journalist Liz Kineke, featuring the work of Tameeka Washington, Member of the IA Emerging Leaders Network

*“What ‘Good Interfaith’ Can Do: My Top 5 Takeaways from Interfaith America”*
by Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, President and CEO of Interfaith Alliance and former IA Senior Advisor for Public Affairs

*“Does a religiously diverse nation need a common story?” with David Brooks*

*How does the power of conversation bring out the best in us? with Krista Tippett*

*What do evangelical Christians want for America? with Shirley Hoogstra*

*How do we live together when we profoundly disagree? with John a. powell*
Interfaith Leadership Summit

In August 2022, IA’s annual Interfaith Leadership Summit (formerly known as the Interfaith Leadership Institute), returned to an in-person format for the first time since 2019. We welcomed 335 participants from 132 institutions to the three-day training event in Chicago. IA staff and members of the IA Emerging Leaders Network facilitated six participant training tracks (three for students and three for educators) offering beginner-to-advanced learning and models of interfaith dialogue, engagement, and action that can be replicated on campus and in local communities. Participants also had the chance to join plenary sessions, optional symposia and workshops, and social activities to enhance their experience.

**READ:** “Interfaith Summit Dreams of America as a Potluck, Not a Battlefield” by RNS Reporter Bob Smietana

Even as our scope of work expands into new sectors, IA’s programs with campuses and emerging leaders continue to deepen and expand. By equipping them with the skills and resources to make a difference, IA is shaping the next generation of leaders to advance America’s foundational strength of religious diversity.
CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT
Queens University of Charlotte (Charlotte, NC) continued their COVID-19 vaccine outreach and education initiatives as part of a second cohort of FIVA campuses working in the Carolinas throughout 2022. Student ambassadors interviewed individuals who identify with a wide variety of faith traditions to increase religious literacy and collaborated with organizations on and off campus, including Pineville Neighbors Place, HOPE Community Clinic of East Charlotte, and Habitat for Humanity Charlotte to conduct vaccine outreach. The team also produced a “Faith in Our Community” podcast about campus and community responses to the pandemic.

READ: “Want to Increase Vaccine Uptake? North Carolina Students Say ‘Look at Each Other in a Humane Way’” by Chase Mauerhan, Student at Queens University of Charlotte

IA also awarded 51 Faith and Health Campus Grants to educators promoting interfaith approaches in health-related fields through curricular development, co-curricular initiatives, and faculty-student research. Examples of projects include student interns at Southeast Community College (Lincoln, NE) responding to the health needs of local Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and educators at La Salle University (Philadelphia, PA) creating a Religion and Health Student Research Fellowship. Grantees were grouped in cohorts based on themes such as religion and health in society, health equity, COVID-19, and competency building for pre-health professionals. They met monthly to share progress on projects, problem-solve, and share resources.

READ: “Meet our Faith and Health Grant Cohort Leaders” by Rachel Kline, former IA Program Manager

Faith and Health Grants
Building on the success and lessons learned during our Faith in the Vaccine Ambassadors (FIVA) program, IA continues to support educators and students working at the intersection of faith and health.

Through 2022, IA extended our FIVA program in North and South Carolina, providing funding and resources for 18 campuses working to increase trust in and access to the COVID-19 vaccine in their local communities. The FIVA program highlighted the positive role religion and interfaith cooperation can play in a moment of national crisis, as well as the promise of engaging diverse religious identities and communities to foster human well-being.

To support individuals seeking to develop (or continue developing) the knowledge and skills required to contribute to the realization of a truly interfaith America, IA launched the online course “Foundations of Interfaith Leadership” in August 2022. Students and educators who attend a Summit and independently complete the five-hour course are eligible for a professional Certificate in Interfaith Leadership.

EXPLORE: “Foundations of Interfaith Leadership”

“This is] my fourth year attending the Interfaith Leadership Summit, including the first one at the White House/Georgetown in 2010. The consistent factor has been how transformative and empowering the Summit is for students to develop these skills and the confidence to use them effectively and to build community with so many other students and allies across the country who are similarly invested in this work. I have seen them continue to draw on these skills in their careers.”

— MAEVE CALLAN, PHD, PROFESSOR OF RELIGION AND CO-DIRECTOR OF THE INTERFAITH FELLOWS PROGRAM, SIMPSON COLLEGE (INDIANOLA, IA)
Emerging Leaders Network

Through our Emerging Leaders Network, which now includes more than 2,100 members, IA provides support for young adults interested in continuing their interfaith learning after graduation. Previously known as the Alumni Network, the Emerging Leaders Network is now open to individuals who participated in IA programs as undergraduate students, as well as other interested young professionals seeking community and resources for engaging in interfaith work. Network opportunities include fellowships and grants, in-person events and gatherings, and support for public writing and speaking.

**EMERGING LEADER SPOTLIGHT**

Saliya Ali is the Multilingual Community Outreach Coordinator at South Dakota Voices for Peace. Saliya, who identifies as Muslim, first connected with IA when she attended an Interfaith Leadership Summit as an undergraduate student at Augustana University. In 2022, with the support of IA, she collaborated with partners to build a coalition of interfaith leaders advocating for social justice issues, such as equitable access to healthcare, and helped coordinate an interfaith Love Your Neighbor bus tour.

**READ:** “Why Muslims and Jews are Working Together in South Dakota” by Saliya Ali and Jen Dreiske

**EMERGING LEADER SPOTLIGHT**

Anu Gorukanti, MD, is a community advocate, public health practitioner, and pediatric hospitalist currently employed at UCLA Medical Center. She identifies as Hindu/Buddhist and cares deeply about building safe spaces for reflection and introspection for all people. As an inaugural IA Sacred Journey Fellow, Anu expanded programming offered by her organization, Introspective Spaces, which she co-founded in 2020. Introspective Spaces is a community of women in healthcare committed to deep connection to better engage in their work and reimagine a more compassionate and equitable healthcare system. With the support of IA, they held their first in-person retreat in October 2022.

**READ:** “At a California Retreat, Women in Health Care Find Rest and Restoration” by Anu Gorukanti, MD, IA Sacred Journey Fellow

**EMERGING LEADER SPOTLIGHT**

Matthew Segil co-leads IA’s Interfaith at Work Education Cohort. Matthew was a middle school math and science educator in Massachusetts for over four years. During his time as a teacher, and with the support of IA, he hosted interfaith dinners for his fellow educators centered around the Jewish practice of Shabbat to build an inclusive community focused on education, joy, and cultural exchange. His interest in bringing people with different worldviews together over conversation and food began during his time as a student at the University of Vermont (Burlington, VT).

**READ:** “Welcome to the Table: Why I Love Hosting Interfaith Meals” by Matthew Segil
Key elements in advancing pluralism are respecting one another’s identities, building relationships, and acting for the common good. Seeking shared values and working together across ideological differences allows us to connect communities and weave a stronger civic fabric together.

Bridging the Gap (BTG) equips students and educators with the skills and knowledge to better engage across deep divides in our polarized society. It has grown dramatically since launching in 2020 with two campuses and 16 students. In the past two years, BTG has engaged more than 40 campuses that have reached 1,000+ students and educators through a variety of program delivery models.

“...the skills embedded in the BTG program (particularly purpose, listening, and storytelling) are invaluable for addressing the current climate of division and enmity in our society.”

– SARA SHADY, PHD, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ACADEMIC INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, BETHEL UNIVERSITY (ST. PAUL, MN)

As BTG expands, we encourage campuses to think creatively about how best to utilize bridgebuilding skills within their unique context. Some participating colleges and universities partner with other local institutions to run intensive programs that bring student cohorts from each institution together to learn and practice BTG principles. Other campuses have created a BTG course solely within their own institution, convening students and educators with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and worldviews. Educators on many other campuses utilize elements of BTG in curricular and co-curricular activities, including student leadership training and professional development opportunities for staff and administrators.
CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

With the support of IA, a team of educators at Tuskegee University (Tuskegee, AL) organized and staffed an HIV/AIDS information, education, and outreach booth during the 57th Annual Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee held in March 2022. This event commemorates Bloody Sunday and those who sacrificed on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in the struggle to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965. They partnered with local nonprofit organizations to provide HIV/AIDS educational materials and COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment to event attendees. Selma Mayor James Perkins, Jr. was among many who attended and engaged with the team.

Through a series of webinar events, IA engaged an even wider community in conversations about how faith can inform a positive approach to community care around HIV/AIDS.

Interfaith HIV/AIDS Capacity Building Grants

Through a partnership with the Gilead COMPASS Initiative® at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, IA is engaging faith traditions to address the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS throughout the American South. In total, IA has awarded Faith and HIV/AIDS Capacity Building Grants to 21 campuses in seven southeastern states, including 17 HBCUs, to host events, develop curriculum, and share information to reduce HIV/AIDS stigma in their communities.

READ: “A Divinity School Steps Up to Fight the HIV Epidemic in the South” by Monique Parsons, former IA Managing Editor

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT

Belmont University (Nashville, TN) is implementing BTG principles at multiple levels of their campus environment with the support of IA. In 2022 they hosted a collaborative campus intensive experience bringing together students from neighboring Fisk University and Vanderbilt University. Belmont educators also attended the 2022 Interfaith Leadership Summit and began planning additional activities to engage students, faculty, and staff on their campus, including a storytelling retreat and curricular integration of BTG principles and learning tools. Belmont’s Vice President for Faith-Based Engagement and Church Relations, Todd L. Leake, PhD, describes BTG in this way: “[BTG] offers something unique in higher education: a chance for students to experience that what unites them is greater than the divisions society insists should divide them.”

Answering the Call: Black Faith Communities & the HIV and AIDS Epidemic
February 7, 2022

Crisis, Community, and Campus Life: Greek Life’s Response to HIV and AIDS
December 1, 2022
Civic Bridgebuilding

IA is an active catalyst, collaborator, and thought leader in the bridgebuilding sector, partnering with field leaders to launch innovative programs and provide new approaches to engaging religiously diverse communities throughout the American civic landscape.

IA provides advice and support for policy approaches that can facilitate the involvement and participation of religious and ethical communities in national bridgebuilding initiatives. This has included efforts to support the Building Civic Bridges Act, bi-partisan federal legislation that would establish an office of bridgebuilding within AmeriCorps.

**READ:** “For a Network of Bridgebuilders, New Legislation May Chart a Path Forward”

In September, IA launched our newest bridgebuilding initiative, the Team Up Project, in partnership with Catholic Charities, Habitat for Humanity, and the YMCA of the USA. Over the next few years, we will train thousands of local community leaders in the skills of bridgebuilding and tell an inspiring story of what we can do together when we “team up.”

**READ:** “We Know That Bridging Deep Differences Is Possible. Our Organizations Do It Every Day” by Team Up Project partner leaders

“[An interfaith America] means a nation of citizens animated by a deep and generative curiosity about each other. It is a society where the instinctual response to disagreement is a desire for understanding, bridgebuilding, and the hard work of crafting as much common ground as is possible.”

— NOAH SILVERMAN, IA SENIOR DIRECTOR OF LEARNING
Honoring the Past.  
Celebrating the Present.  
Envisioning the Future.

This past year marked twenty years of building bridges of interfaith understanding across the United States. In October 2022, we were honored to gather with friends, partners, and staff of Interfaith America to celebrate this milestone.

WATCH: “Celebrating 20 Years of Interfaith America”

We are so grateful for the community IA has formed over the past two decades and the work we have accomplished together. With your support, IA has:

- Trained 17,000+ leaders in the skills needed for building an interfaith nation
- Built a network of 1,150+ campuses committed to religious pluralism
We look forward to all that is in store over the next twenty years, as our nation comes to a richer understanding of itself as a truly interfaith America. Thank you for being an irreplaceable part of making that happen!

Seeded $12 million to interfaith projects impacting campuses and local communities

Amplified inspiring stories from across our religiously diverse democracy

“I learned how to find my voice and see the value in my story through my work with Interfaith America. I think I once thought that I didn’t necessarily have something to offer. But I learned in interfaith spaces that we need lots of different voices. And not just in terms of worldviews. Not only do we need humanist voices in interfaith, but we also need different voices that tell the story of pluralism in different ways. And it made me feel like my own particular way of doing so had value.”

— CHRIS STEDMAN, MEMBER OF THE IA EMERGING LEADERS NETWORK

“I’m looking forward to how we continue to use our skill sets and our power to make things relevant for today’s communities, both religious communities and communities at large .... I’m excited about how we could be leveraging our collective power as an organization to really move the conversation on those issues.”

— JENAN MOHAJIR, IA SENIOR DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS
Our Supporters

Giving reflects the 18-month period between August 1, 2021, and January 31, 2023.

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