

## MEDIA ADVISORY

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**Contact: Rebecca 'Bex' Bates, Director of Communications, IFYC**

[bex@ifyc.org](mailto:bex@ifyc.org)

312.533.4207

### **Record-breaking number of U.S. college students to converge in Chicago, make plans to turn back tide of polarization and identity-based tribalism on campus.**

**Chicago, IL**– The 2019 Interfaith Leadership Institute (ILI) will be one of the largest gatherings of college and university students and educators working towards religious pluralism in U.S. history. Over three days this August, roughly 500 attendees representing hundreds of campuses and myriad faiths and worldviews will come together to meet, engage, and receive intensive training on how to build bridges of cooperation over bitter, seemingly intractable divides in American life today.

Equipped with these unique skills, each aspiring leader will start this fall with an action plan to make their campus environments more inclusive, civil, and interconnected.

**What:** Organized by Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) the ILI is an annual conference of U.S. undergrads and higher ed staff, faculty and administrators committed to making interfaith cooperation the norm, not the exception, in 21<sup>st</sup> century society. A packed three days of expert-led trainings, workshops, and plenaries, the ILI challenges participants to engage those very different to themselves, in ways that don't paper over deep disagreements but identify shared values and concerns as common ground on which to build a relationship. Educators come to explore new ways to teach these ideas and make them a part of campus life. Students come to grapple with what it means to be a leader *and* member of the most religiously diverse generation in American history (Pew Research Center, 2015.) The ILI is a space where (for example) Muslim and Jewish students who vehemently disagree on Israel-Palestine issues learn to recognize that difference but identify other issues like climate change or homelessness that they can work together on. A space where an evangelical Christian and a committed atheist can meaningfully find concepts in the other's worldview that resonate and inspire. In a time when civil discourse and respect for different worldviews feels increasingly quaint, the ILI equips rising leaders to do the hard work of building community from diversity.



**When & Where:** The 2019 ILI takes place Friday, August 2, 2019 through Sunday, August 4, 2019 at the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile, 540 North Michigan Avenue, centrally located in Chicago, Illinois. For details including the full schedule of events go [here](#).

**Who:** The ILI is a showcase in diverse individuals and groups, estimated to host over 300 students of more than 40 distinct religious and worldview identities, and around 200 educators (faculty and student affairs personnel) all representing over 160 U.S. campuses. Notably, one of the keynote events is a panel discussion *Engaging Religious Difference in Divided Times*. IFYC's Founder & President Eboo Patel will moderate a conversation between prominent interfaith leaders and experts on religion in America with viewpoints across the political spectrum, including Alia Bilal, Director of Community Relations at Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN); Emma Green, Staff Writer at The Atlantic; and Montse Alvarado, VP and Executive Director at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

**Why:** Because the ILI is the singular event for aspiring interfaith leaders addressing conflict and division in today's American life.

**How to cover:** IFYC's Communications team can provide further background and other information on the 2019 ILI and offer selected media access to the event, including key training and other events spaces and interviews with participating students, educators, and organizers. For more information, contact Rebecca 'Bex' Bates, Director of Communications, at [bex@ifyc.org](mailto:bex@ifyc.org).

### **About IFYC**

Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) is a nationally active 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working towards an America where people of different faiths, worldviews, and traditions can bridge differences and find common values to build a shared life together.

To realize this vision, IFYC partners with American colleges and universities and other higher education stakeholders to help make interfaith cooperation a vital part of the college experience. Active since 2002, IFYC supports a network of students, educators, and administrators spanning almost 600 U.S. colleges and universities. Beyond campus, IFYC is a trusted partner to major organizations leading innovation in 21st century higher education, including the American Association of Colleges & Universities, the Council of Independent Colleges, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and many others.

In wider civil society, IFYC's research is informing public policy, and our growing network of alumni are advancing interfaith cooperation and advocating for religious pluralism in various areas of American life. Learn more at [IFYC.org](http://IFYC.org).

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