



Faith in Public Life

Grantee Impact Story 2019

George Family Foundation

An Imam, a Rabbi and a Seventh Day Adventist pastor sit down to breakfast together. It's an early morning in Columbus, Ohio, as a community room at the Abubakar Assidiq Islamic Center fills with clergy for Faith in Public Life's monthly Interfaith Justice Roundtable.

Initially, we organized this regular gathering to facilitate relationship-building among diverse faith leaders who otherwise wouldn't be in dialogue. But the monthly gatherings have evolved into a sacred space where people from widely different backgrounds learn how to show up for one another in everyday life and at moments of crisis.

In an increasingly hostile political environment, where stoking "fear of the other" is a form of political currency, this networking and friendship is a form of holy resistance.

Together, the clergy have worked on issues of police brutality, pressing [for accountability](#) and retraining in response to the fatal shootings of multiple unarmed black men by Columbus Police. They've also provided support to local immigrant families torn apart by deportation and done in-depth training provided by Faith in Public Life on how to counter bigoted rhetoric that incites violence.

They also show up for one another at moments of crisis. When the Salt and Light Brigade, an extreme conservative Christian group, made plans to picket with hateful signs outside a Columbus mosque on their holy day of Eid al Fitr, Faith in Public Life Ohio Director, Dan Clark, made calls to the clergy of the Interfaith Justice Roundtable to activate their rapid response. When the anti-Muslim protestors arrived at the mosque, nearly 200 Christian and Jewish community members stood shoulder to shoulder forming a [barrier of love](#) shielding Muslim families from hate. No attacks occurred, and the worshippers were spared the experience of harmful confrontation. Months later, when the notorious anti-LGBT Westboro Baptist Church targeted a Columbus church for affirming the LGBTQ community, members of the Interfaith Justice Roundtable and their congregants showed up again to [stand in support](#) of their Ohio faith family and demonstrate what radical welcome looks like.

With the support of the George Family Foundation, Faith in Public Life has been able to conduct deep organizing and facilitate authentic relationship-building between interfaith leaders in our

hub states, like Ohio, that enables us to not only work from a place of trust, but also to inoculate our faith communities against divisive rhetoric along lines of race, religion and sexual orientation.

In Ohio, our monthly Interfaith Justice Roundtable regularly engages 30-40 faith leaders and has grown to include 197 on a mailing list representing people from 35 churches, 4 mosques and 3 synagogues. Over the last 18 months, we've built networks of 630 faith leaders across four states (Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida) and trained them in preventing religiously and ethnically targeted violence. As inflammatory rhetoric in the media targets entire groups of people on the basis of nationality, religion, or race, we are equipping faith leaders to recognize the language of violence, actively stand together across faith traditions, and promote peace.

Attached is a toolkit we created to help people of faith create rapid-response action plans in preparation for violence-triggering events in their communities.

Our Faith Leaders in Action



Columbus Rabbi, Muslim and Christian leaders participating in a “Meet a Muslim” event hosted by members of Faith in Public Life’s Interfaith Justice Roundtable.



Seek the Peace of the City March Columbus, Ohio where faith leaders led a moral march calling for community action to address police violence and promote safety for all community members.