

# The Ninth International Youth Media Summit

## A Celebration of Youth Voices

*“Don’t give up and don’t think that your good deeds don’t change anything in the world; change yourself...and everyone else will follow.” IYMS 2014 Youth Delegate*



They came from around the world, as far away as Nigeria and Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Serbia. Seventy-eight young people and their mentors from twenty-two countries met for two weeks to face down not only seven urgent social issues, but their own pre-conceived prejudices about each other. From July 14-27, 2014, on the beautiful campus of Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, California, they explored the darker side of human nature to discover how their voices could make a difference.

### **A Day of Service To Challenge the Seven Issues:**

**Violence ~ Poverty ~ Discrimination ~ Environment ~ Health ~ Women ~ Youth**

The delegates divided into seven issue groups and shared research from their home countries. Then each issue group participated in a Day of Service, visiting local champions, looking for inspiration. The Health Group helped plant peppers at Villa Romano Green Farms and sampled the organic strawberries and honey. The Environment Group helped clear brush at the Aliso & Wood Canyons Wilderness Park.

The Violence Group heard from a victim of violence turned therapist. The Poverty Group volunteered at Second Harvest Food Bank and Working Wardrobes. The Women’s Group heard the heartbreaking tale of a victim of human trafficking and what’s being done to prevent it in the US. The Youth Group met with Children’s Hope International to learn how literacy was helping children in the Middle East.



The Discrimination Group visited the Center in Santa Ana to learn about the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. It was a turning point for one of the delegates; *“Before the Summit, I hated gay people. After the Summit, it changed. I start to understand their situation.”*

### **Filmmaking Training**

Summit delegates received training from international film professionals:

- ↳ Cinematographers Miomir Rajčević (Serbia), Zoran Šmid (Slovenia), James Gleason (USA)
- ↳ Producers Hania Asgari (Iran) and Marija Vidaković (Croatia)
- ↳ Directors Anna Eriksson (Sweden) and Ruzanna Baghdasaryan (Armenia)
- ↳ Post Production Sound Mixer Nikola Janković (Serbia) ↳ Artist Teddi Shattuck (USA)
- ↳ A special master class on animation from Academy Award winner Jelena Erceg.



*"I have more experiences about those seven issues around the world, and I am willing to help people after the Summit. Not like the 'me' before this."*

*IYMS 2014 Youth Delegate.*

## **Producing Their Films**

Armed with their conviction, energy and talents in storytelling, film and animation, the delegates in each issue group had six days to write, film and edit a short film that would powerfully motivate others young people in their generation to take action.

While editors finished picture and sound edit on each film, a representative of each group recorded a Declaration for Action – things he or she would do when they returned to their home countries to “be the change”. Writers in each group developed a Study Guide to use in conjunction with the short film to engage young audiences in an interactive experience. This would enable them to examine their own attitudes and behaviors, and think about small changes they could make in their everyday lives.



## **Supporting the Summit Youth**

*"You have started a great series of events with tremendous influence on world peace and human rights. I wish you great success and I'll be honored to continue working with you." Summit donor and volunteer, Al Soley, owner Aliso Creek Printing.*

To support the activities of the Summit, local businesses donated services and funds. Dozens of volunteers from Orange County and Los Angeles communities helped as drivers, field trip organizers, bedsheet donors, actors for movies and tour guides. And the staff of Soka University had a huge impact on the delegates – supporting their technical needs, keeping them safe and secure, expertly managing three different performance events and feeding them delicious and healthy food. The Bistro staff even researched and prepared a traditional Balkan BBQ and Afghan Iftar feast for memorable cultural events.

*"My life has been changed by the experience and witness of the incredible miracles that [the Summit] created. Your group CAN move mountains and WILL make a difference."  
Michelle Gomez-Arguello, Manager of the Soka Bistro.*



## Voices of Children from the War Zones

*"Never stop believing in your ideas, because ideas are bulletproof." IYMS 2014 Delegate*

"The Role of Youth, Media and the Arts in the Future of Afghanistan" brought together distinguished Afghan Americans and the three Afghan delegates for a panel discussion that celebrated the first time Afghanistan was represented at the Summit. Some surprising conclusions from the panel: Afghan youth are now playing a stronger role in the country's economic and political spheres. They are inspired to stay in Afghanistan to rebuild the country. This is happening in spite of the grave concerns the youth have about their security.



Masooda, the youngest of the Afghan delegates, put this into perspective. After enjoying the peaceful sunset from the lawn overlooking the canyons of the University, she was reminded that she used to have such a place of beauty in Kabul, but it was now destroyed. *"We cannot sit like this in Afghanistan, to have no tension and be peaceful."*

Insights such as these had a profound impact on the other young delegates, many of whom had never lived within the shadow of war. But for those delegates from Afghanistan, Palestine, Israel, Iran, Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia and Slovenia, the experiences of Mohamed from Sierra Leone recalled past and current nightmares. Mohamed told of the brutal civil war in his country, how he was kidnapped at the age of four and forced to be a child soldier. Now a college student studying peace and reconciliation, he said with the conviction of his own personal experience, *"Peaceful coexistence is possible. First you have to change yourself."* He looked around the room. *"Then reach out your hand and change someone else."* It was a moment that reverberated through all the remaining days as delegates put his words into practice.



In the last days of the Summit, Aviad from Israel summed up the feelings of many of the delegates: *"This was one of the most meaningful experiences that we have ever had and we going to keep it with us forever. I met amazing people that unfortunately, it is only here in USA that we can meet and discuss. This is the only way because our countries are defined as "enemy countries," meaning that our governments will not let us cross geographical borders. I want to emphasize this subject a little more:*



***WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF ENEMY? I DON'T KNOW WHAT DOES IT MEAN, ENEMY, CAN YOU DEFINE HIM? HOW DOES HE LOOK LIKE? DOES HE HAVE BLACK HAIR? BLOND? IS HE TALL OR SHORT? IS IT A MAN? IS IT A WOMAN? For me there is no such thing called an "enemy" and if there is one - there is no reason that the enemy can't become my friend even if the conflict is very, very long."***

## The Summit - Using Art to Transform

Facebook post from a delegate after the Summit: *"Guys I had the weirdest dream ever... there were a group of people around the world doing a lot of bad things and all of you were in my dream and we had a talent show in the desert then we discovered [a] secret place, and we tried to escape."* For 14 days, the Summit became that secret place of art and peace.

### Delegate Talent Show

Art can transform lives through the process of exploring one's world to connect to others - and the artist's imagination can create the world we aspire to. The visual and performing arts are all fundamental to the art of filmmaking. All were celebrated at IYMS 2014.



One of the joyous highlights of IYMS 2014 was the Delegate Talent Show. The crowd loved the diversity: modern and classical dancing; Nigerian clapping, guitar, ukele and Native American flute songs; love songs, rock songs, rap songs - and a fashion show. Renee Cox (USA) proved that rapping truth can make even a woman over 50 a superstar. After the show, a spontaneous dance brought all delegates to the stage - the power of music to unify.

*"Let's celebrate our diversity \* Rejoice in our similarity \* No matter where we're from geographically \* We can become one extended family. (Renee Cox)*

### Colorful Wings - Afghan Youth Art Exhibit

*"Our art is our power...we want a better Afghanistan and we will draw that picture."*

Susan Atai's nonprofit, the Afghan Development and Inspiration Bureau, founded an art gallery in Herat, Afghanistan to showcase the work of young artists, help them earn their living and transform their community through their art. An auction of the paintings brought to the Summit will benefit International Orphan Care, a nonprofit that provides job training for Afghan youth.



### Musical Performances that Inspired

At Soka the delegates were treated to musical performances by the Lark Musical Society, the IYE Taiko Drummers, the South Coast Conservatory, the Trevor Anderies Jazz Ensemble, the L.A. Youth Guitar Orchestra, David Alfaro, REMJ and the international iPalpiti Orchestra. Delegates traveled to the Hollywood Bowl to see Gustavo Dudamel conduct the L.A. Philharmonic in "All Star Beethoven". Music truly was the universal language at IYMS 2014.

### Gone with the Wind - Installation Art of Wolfgang Richter on the Soka Campus



Wolfgang used old videotapes that are vanishing from use. He wanted people to connect with the sky and the surroundings. *"It is a kind of mobile, playing with wind and sound, with reflections of the sun. How do messages survive? They are not fixed forever. They are vanishing - gone with the wind."*

