

**The Pluralism
Project**

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY

Alexis Salomone, Assistant Director
617.496.2481 • asalomone@fas.harvard.edu
www.pluralism.org

Pluralism Project Launches Initiative “Response and Resilience in Multireligious Boston” Through Grant from the Open Society Foundations

Cambridge, MA, March 1, 2017– On March 7th, The Pluralism Project at Harvard University will launch its new initiative, “Communities Against Hate: Response and Resilience in Multireligious Boston.” The public event, held at 6 pm in Ticknor Lounge, Boylston Hall on Harvard’s campus, will be a roundtable discussion with civic and religious leaders as well as members of communities most affected by increased hate speech and bias-motivated harassment. This event will include civic leaders from the Attorney General’s Office, Cambridge City Council, the ACLU, and other local organizations. The second event in this project, a performance and discussion of the powerful play “Kultar’s Mime,” will take place in early April in Cambridge.

This project is made possible by a grant from the Open Society Foundations’ rapid-response initiative, “Communities Against Hate,” which allocates multiple small grants for projects responding to and fighting against acts of hate while supporting collaboration, cooperation, and bridge-building among vulnerable communities and their allies. The Pluralism Project’s longstanding track record as a trusted resource for research, education, and collaboration makes it an ideal partner for this initiative of the Open Society Foundations.

Incidents of hate crimes and bias-motivated harassment are rising in Greater Boston, from spray-painted swastikas in high school bathrooms to the verbal harassment of Sikh and Muslim college students. At the same time, we have seen a striking increase in civic response that builds solidarity. The Project’s 8-month initiative will collaborate with Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Hindu, and Christian communities to track incidents of harassment as well as the response of local communities. This project will also include monthly sessions for leaders from these communities in order to centralize information sharing, document local incidents, offer skill-building opportunities, and allow leaders to network and share best practices in increasingly difficult times. Pluralism Project staff will also develop a decision-based case study about a Boston incident that might enable leaders and laity to understand some of the dilemmas and strategies of response when an individual or community is attacked.

Pluralism Project Director and Harvard University Professor Diana Eck expressed her excitement for the work ahead: “In this climate of fear, threat, and uncertainty that affects many vulnerable communities, it is urgent to develop multi-sided networks of response and resilience. We need to hear each other -- Sikhs, Muslims, Jews, and Christians, African Americans and Latinos, mayors and city councilors. Whether the harassment of a Sikh student at Harvard or the swastikas on a suburban school wall, the issues we face are of mutual concern across lines of faith. For many years, the Pluralism Project has been at the forefront of documenting the fast-changing religious landscape of greater

Boston. I look forward to this opportunity to convene a working group of religious and civic leaders as we face the future together.”

As OSF moves forward with other grantees in the Boston area, the Pluralism Project will work to build relationships and collaborate with these new partners. For more information on the event and this initiative, please visit the Pluralism Project website (www.pluralism.org).

About the Pluralism Project: Since 1991, the Pluralism Project has studied the religious implications of post-1965 immigration, taking a cities-based approach to examining the new questions posed for civic life as mosques, gurdwaras, and temples dot the landscape next to churches and synagogues. From this research, Project has produced numerous educational resources used by educators, students, journalists, civic leaders, business professionals, and religious communities. Founded and directed by Dr. Diana Eck, a professor of comparative religion at Harvard, the Pluralism Project has partnered with hundreds of student researchers, dozens of affiliated professors, and countless religious communities across the country. This work is leveraged in its mission to educate, engage and strengthen the next generation of religious and civic leaders in the United States.

For more information, visit www.pluralism.org