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During the horror of the Holocaust, the great Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said the following:

"Those who did not speak out for the Jews do not deserve to sing Gregorian chants."

Bonhoeffer believed that standing up for those in peril was so central to being a Christian - so necessary to the core values of his faith - that those who stood by in silence did not deserve the honor of the title.

It reminds me of a great line in the work of the poet T.S. Elliot. "We do not inherit traditions; we work to make ourselves worthy of them." Bonhoeffer gives us an example of what that meant for him. And when I think about this, I wonder: what does it mean to make ourselves worthy of our traditions in the 21st century? How do the words we speak, our daily actions - and interactions - with those who are different, speak to what it means to be a Jew, or Christian, or Muslim, or Hindu, or humanist today?

One place to start is the way that we treat our neighbors.

A recent Pew study revealed that more than 40% of Americans feel at least "a little" prejudice toward Muslims - compare this to 14-18% who report such prejudice against Christians, Jews or Buddhists. This means that our children are being educated in halls where they are afraid to reveal a whisper of their faith. It translates into fear of the doctors who sit next to us on the plane. It weakens our communities, and distracts us from the work to be done for those in need.

When I think about Bonhoeffer's words, I always ask myself: what am I doing to make myself worthy of the tradition of Islam? What am I called to do as a Muslim?

For me, it is working with the Interfaith Youth Core to make the idea of interfaith cooperation a reality.

Thank you for building this vision with us.

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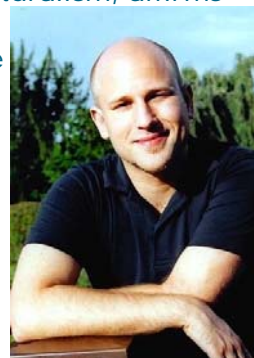
Eboo Patel
Executive Director
Interfaith Youth Core

Interview with Harvard Humanist Chaplain Greg Epstein

IFYC's good friend, Harvard Humanist Chaplain [Greg Epstein](#), recently published a New York Times Best Selling book, [Good Without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe](#). IFYC staff Mary Ellen Giess worked with Greg before coming to IFYC, and she interviews him here about his book and why he believes Humanism and religious pluralism go hand in hand.

Q: Humanism, for those who might not be familiar with the idea - what is it, exactly? How does it differ from atheism or agnosticism?

A: Humanism is formally defined as a progressive life stance, or philosophy of life, that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to live ethical lives of personal fulfillment, aspiring to the greater good of humanity. In other words, Humanism is being good without God. But the emphasis of Humanism is not simply on the "without God" part. It's not just about being an atheist, an agnostic, or a nonreligious person, although Humanism does provide a positive set of values for atheists and agnostics. The emphasis of Humanism is on the good. It's on living a good life, for ourselves, for the sake of our loved ones and of all humanity and of the entire natural world that surrounds and sustains us.



Q: If people were only to read one chapter from your new book, what would it be & why?

A: In the book, I tell the story of how growing up in Flushing, Queens, New York City-the most diverse neighborhood in the most diverse city in the most diverse country in the world-influenced me towards both Humanism and interfaith leadership. I had friends of almost every conceivable religious and ethnic background. Still, even in Flushing there wasn't a lot of dialogue-or understanding-about where the nonreligious fit in. And later I learned that if people could even unaware of Humanism in Flushing, the problem could be much worse in more homogenous parts of the country where people were even less used to interacting with people of different beliefs and traditions. This ignorance leads to some

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very real prejudice-- more Americans say they wouldn't vote for an atheist political candidate than for a candidate from any other group- and as a young Humanist leader encountering prejudice and ignorance I had to do a lot of soul searching as to how to respond. Should I offer religious extremists a rhetorical "eye for an eye?" Or should I just allow them to portray me as less worthy because of my Humanism?

In one long passage I particularly enjoyed writing, I give a Humanist response to MLK's "Christmas Sermon on Peace," talking about how atheists and agnostics can "love their enemies;" not in the sense of warm affection for those who would be prejudiced against us, but in the sense of a firm determination to see every person as worthwhile human being-even those who cannot return the favor towards us just yet.

Q: When you and I met 3 years ago, you really grilled me about my dedication to the Humanist movement. What is the #1 leadership skill you are looking for in young people today?

A: Hey, I don't remember it as grilling you! But these days, what I'm most looking for are young Humanists who are passionate about the issues IFYC works on- strengthening religious pluralism, working for social justice while building bridges between people of different backgrounds. If students like that are looking not only for community but for an incredibly interesting, exciting career option, they should consider applying to Harvard Divinity School. I'd love to mentor them, advise them, and perhaps-unlike the internship you did with me back in the day-pay them!

Spotlight on Faiths Act Fellows in Blackburn



These reflections come from Faiths Act Fellows, Karem Issa and Ushna Mughal, hosted by Blackburn Cathedral in Blackburn, UK. Check out their Faiths Act Fellowship Campaign page [here](#).

Ushna's Reflection

Why should the West care about malaria? To answer this question, my colleague and I draped a mosquito-net over the beloved "Woman and Child" statue in Blackburn town-centre to illustrate that most people affected by malaria are pregnant women and children under the age of five

The sight of a bright blue mosquito net drew many shocked expressions from local shoppers. Many asked us, "Why are you putting a veil on our statue?" Others exclaimed, "What does malaria have to do with us in Blackburn?" One angry citizen rang the police who came to investigate the disruption in the town centre!

[Click here to read Ushna's entire reflection.](#)

Karem's Reflection

Picture this: A Muslim and a Catholic delivering a Sunday sermon on multi-faith action to a packed Anglican cathedral congregation. As a Muslim, I felt honoured to be given this opportunity. But I can't deny that I was also apprehensive about possible reactions.

[Click here to read the rest of Karem's reflection.](#)

I hope these articles have inspired you to share stories of our movement with the world. Thank you for being an interfaith advocate and helping support the work we do.

E.P.

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For more information please contact our Development Department at katya@ifyc.org or 312-573-8852.