

# Introduction

## 1.1 Global Family for Love and Peace

Global Family for Love and Peace (GFLP) is a non-profit tax exempted organization which aims to promote love and peace among all religions across continents through intercultural and interfaith dialogues. Furthermore, GFLP has been participating actively in programs relating to (i) conflict resolution, (ii) peace education, (iii) United Nations Culture of Peace and the International Day of Peace, and (iv) war orphan programs.

### **Our Mission:**

Promoting harmony among people of different race, nationality and religion

### **Our Vision:**

To create a world where love and peace has no boundaries

### 1.1.1 Biography of Dharma Master Hsin Tao



**Ven. Dharma Master Hsin Tao**, Abbot and Founder of the Wu Sheng Monastery on Ling Jiou Mountain, is internationally renowned for having established the Museum of World Religions in Taipei, Taiwan, and for his unceasing efforts to bring about world peace through mutual understanding and dialogue among religions. His continuing promotion of world peace after the tragedy of the Twin Towers disaster in New York City through multifaceted initiatives including a series of Buddhist-Muslim and interfaith dialogues held in many countries around the world between 2002 and 2015 has earned him global recognition as a world religious leader. Master Hsin Tao received Dharma Transmission from Master Ben-huan of the Hongfa Temple in China, becoming the 5<sup>th</sup> successor in the Linji Chan Tradition. He has more than thirty volumes of published works in Chinese, and some works in German and English.

## 1.1.2 Facilitators



**Dr. Maria Reis Habito**, International Program Director of the Museum of World Religions based in Taipei, Taiwan, and also Director of the Elijah Interfaith Institute USA, completed her Ph.D. in East Asian Studies and Philosophy at the University of Munich in 1990. She practiced Zen under Yamada Koun Roshi of the Sanbo Zen Tradition and was appointed a Zen teacher in 2008, leading practice groups in Dallas, Texas and South Bend, Indiana. A longtime disciple of Master Hsin Tao, Maria also works as his translator, and accompanies him on his teachings tours around the world. Her publications include 2 books in German, 2 books in English, and numerous scholarly articles on Buddhist and Interfaith themes. She lives in Dallas, and is married with two young adult sons.



**Dr. Kurt G. Schreiber** is a spiritual director. He helps individuals and organizations clarify goals, heal discordant conditions, and effect change, often through programs addressing differences of religion, culture, gender, and sexuality. He serves as a consultant to, or director of inter-religious, charitable, and business organizations.

In the past, Kurt served as a senior officer and general counsel of companies in the U.S. and Europe. His spiritual practice draws from Christian, Buddhist, and south Asian traditions, and is rooted in the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy and Joel Goldsmith. He holds academic degrees in Economics, Law, and Theological Studies.

### 1.1.3 Biography of Buddhist Panelists



**Jonathan Makransky** graduated from Boston College in 2014 with a degree in Islamic Civilization and Societies and International Studies. Born in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, he regularly attends retreats and does his best to integrate the Dharma into his daily life (it's a continuous journey with bumps along the way). While at BC, he helped to revitalize the Buddhist sitting group through Campus Ministry, studied abroad in Morocco and Kuwait, and became interested in interfaith dialogue through his studies in both Buddhism and Islam. He currently works at a non-profit in Boston that focuses on creating and implementing middle and high school history curricula centered upon ethics and the impact of individual choice in the context of broader societal injustice. He hopes to begin graduate studies in comparative religion in the next year.



**Andrew Bishop** graduated from Boston College in 2015 with a degree in International Studies and Philosophy. He has been actively seeking to understand both the inner and outer structures of suffering, and remains committed to both activism and social service while in search of higher truths. Though raised Catholic, it was not until Andrew spent a semester abroad at Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Boudhanath, Nepal, that he truly found his spiritual path. He has remained plugged into the Tibetan Buddhist tradition through study and practice, and has spent the last year traveling around Asia within various Buddhist contexts. Andrew has now returned to Boston to begin working and living at Haley House, a multi-faceted non-profit organization, where he will collectively manage a soup kitchen with a small community of residential volunteers.



**Jack Chan** graduated from National University of Singapore in 2012 with a Master of Architecture. He began incorporating Buddhist practice into his life in 2011 after a profound affinity with Ch’an meditation. Following Dharma Master Hsin Tao, Jack regularly participates in overseas meditation retreats in the USA, Germany, Austria and Taiwan. He was also an assistant representing the Global Family for Love and Peace, a United-Nations affiliated NGO, in international religious conferences such as the Spirit of Humanity 2014 in Iceland, and the Parliament of World Religions 2015 in Salt Lake City. He volunteers twice a year in the Water-Earth Repentance Ceremony and International Youth Camps in Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore. In 2014, he went through a short-term renunciation in Myanmar, experiencing a monastic lifestyle. He is currently assisting at the Museum of World Religions in Taiwan.

### **Alexis Larsson**



Alexis Larsson is a student at the Graduate Center at CUNY. She leads a Working Group on rhetoric and refugee protection through the Center for the Humanities, and she teaches writing studies at Queens College. Alexis initially developed her interest in Buddhism in a Unitarian Universalist youth group. She wound her way through armchair explorations in Zen, followed by a few years of S.N. Goenka's Vipassana, until she made it to her teacher, Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, and his Nyingma lineage of Vajrayana Buddhism from Tibet. As an instructor, Alexis teaches rhetoric through the lens of interdependence, and encourages a compassionate approach to the writing process.

### 1.1.4 Biography of Muslim Panelists



**Neghena Hamidi** is currently a Political Science and Human Rights student in Hunter college. She has worked as a NYC Regional Director for WISE (Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment) which is an organization that is dedicated towards creating safe spaces for the Muslim community and teaching self-defense to young Muslim girls especially those who wear hijab. Since the Paris Attacks, she has worked towards creating different platforms to vocalize Counter-Islamophobia rhetoric through "Muslim American Anthologies" which is a film and video platform that allows Muslim Americans to share their experiences. She is extremely dedicated and passionate about narrative building and creating ways in which young POC can somehow share their story in this political and social environment.



**Ali Alvi** is from the DC area and moved to NYC in 2011. His background is in sales and marketing. He has his own marketing company here in the city and he is also the team advisor for Who is Hussain? NYC. The vision of Who is Hussain? is " A world where every individual is inspired by Hussain ibn Ali to implement positive change." The organization does that by helping the homeless, working with the National Association for Mental Illness, along with many other events to help unite humanity. It raises awareness of Hussain ibn Ali and his stand against oppression, racism, and terrorism.



**Asra Rizvi** is a Schizophrenia Research Coordinator at Zucker Hillside Hospital- Northwell Health System. She is also completing her Masters in Clinical Psychology at

Teachers College, Columbia University (graduating this December); and has a Bachelor's in Psychology from Queens College at CUNY. Outside of her professional and Academic life, she is also one of the team leaders of the NYC/NJ chapter of NPO called 'Who is Hussain?'.



**Saima Usmani** is a second year medical student at NYU Langone Medical School. She has participated in interfaith dialogue in her hometown with the local parish and synagogue for several years, and loves to learn and reach out to different communities. She aims to learn more about Buddhism through this dialogue as she has little to no exposure to the world of Buddhism.