

From 18-21 November 2009, the Pioneers program culminated in a second trans-Atlantic, urban summit in New York City. It brought together a diverse, dynamic group of community leaders from Amsterdam and New York City, ages 25 to 40, for a dialogue on how social innovators can work together to promote active citizenship in diverse, open cities.

Over a period of three days, the group was challenged to identify ways of supporting one another's work, to share resources, challenges, and ideas, and to explore the launch of ongoing, sustainable initiatives that promote creative ideas that advance urban diversity, tolerance, and civic engagement. They heard from renown thinkers who established a framework of the complex, interconnected issues facing the cities of the new millennium and the role of leaders therein. Our speakers promoted a whole systems, strengths-based approach, as well as revolutionary new ways of addressing some of the most serious problems facing society. They stressed the need for balance and personal sustainability in order to maximize impact, and inspired the Pioneers with concrete ideas regarding how to build an "infrastructure of hope." No topic was left untouched as we considered the issues facing today's urban society: education; race and religion; the environment; civic engagement; incarceration; healthcare; transportation; and the vicious cycle of poverty.

Participants were chosen from a wide array of backgrounds, including academia, the arts, business, education, government, grassroots activism, media, and technology. By the completion of the three-day gathering, the Pioneers collectively identified three promising initiatives, all of which attendees committed to supporting moving forward:

- **Open my Story:** This photography-based program gives marginalized youth a trans-Atlantic lens into the past, interaction in the present, and plan for the future. This is accomplished by engaging minority and immigrant youth in Amsterdam, New York City, and beyond in capturing underreported cultural histories, then integrating those stories into the historical narratives taught in city classrooms.
- **Resources Of the Open Mind (ROOM):** How can the Pioneers alumni best identify potential collaborators and supporters amongst their fellow graduates, and scale this "network of opportunity" globally? The group will create a strengths-based framework for an asset mapping and collaboration platform, with program participants serving as its initial user base. This social network will serve to connect community leaders with strengths to those who have a need in that capacity, and vice versa, as well as to help social entrepreneurs identify collaborators for new initiatives.
- **Ministry of the Impossible:** By promoting highly innovative solutions to pressing urban issues via an interactive, community-driven website, this viral, global network of community leaders and artists will promote civic experimentation, creative best practices, and out-of-the-box thinking.

As a result of the launch of these projects, and through the effective programming of the summit, the organizers promoted the following ideals and objectives:

1. **Collaboration:** Convened social innovators in order to launch ongoing initiatives that promote active citizenship and urban diversity in Amsterdam and New York;
2. **Community:** Created a forum for the urban leaders of tomorrow to come together and establish lasting, transformative relationships through the exchange of ideas, and the sharing of perspectives on how to best meet the challenges of citizen engagement and social responsibility;
3. **Connection:** Provided inspiring examples of social innovation achieved through non-traditional, effective processes, thus encouraging more of the same; and

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4. **Cities:** Accomplished all of this with a focus on the urban environment, which is timely and relevant, given the majority of people now live in cities for the first time in the history of human civilization.

The Pioneers program was an opportunity for tomorrow's leaders to network, to be inspired, to focus, to think proactively by starting to ask the question, "how do I win everyday?", to dream even bigger, and most importantly, to reassess how they could best serve the cities they call home:

- *Cherish and promote little pockets of social innovation:* Often smaller local initiatives are overlooked by larger (governmental) structures but change on a small scale amounts to change on a broader scale.
- *Build infrastructure of hope:* Make people aware of the opportunities and potential in their city and in themselves as active citizens. Many initiatives – offline and online – have already found a valuable existence by putting a human face and story to the issues at hand. Engage these local residents as a key to mobilizing political will.
- *Create a next generation of diverse representative leadership:* Tackle diversity with diversity! Reach out to young active citizens and ask them to take part in your network and activities.
- *Create networks of opportunity:* high value networks are diverse, multidisciplinary, transparent and easily accessible. Serve the community by allowing people in these networks to access even higher opportunity networks.
- *Create room in important international forums* for young people with creative and critical ideas. Active ambitious people often do not belong to political parties or governmental structures, but they are crucial to give their (outsiders) view to real time processes taking place on the ground.
- *And access to free wifi in the city for everyone!*

On November 21 Pioneers presented their projects and ideas at a public party entitled **Pioneers Fix the World** with contributions by Baratunde Thurston, Steve Lambert, Kirsten van den Hul, Justin Krebs, Frans Timmermans as well as a performance by Double Dutch (Najiba Abdellaoui and Kirsten van den Hul).

Pioneers have met and discussed with **Cornell Brooks**, Executive Director of the *New Jersey Institute for Social Justice*, a Newark based urban research and advocacy organization dedicated to the advancement of New Jersey's urban communities and residents; **Majora Carter** founded the pioneering and highly successful non-profit environmental justice organization *Sustainable South Bronx*, where she served as Executive Director until leaving in 2008 to form a consulting group that helps cities and state governments develop "green jobs" programs; **Debbie Bial**, Founder and President of the *Posse Foundation*, a non-profit organization that creates access for disadvantaged urban youth at top-tier universities nationwide. **Sam Cherribi** is senior lecturer in sociology at Emory University; **Christopher Malone**, Associate Professor in Political Science, Pace University; **Kenneth Jackson** the Jacques Barzun Professor in History and the Social Sciences at Columbia University and the editor of the *Encyclopedia of New York City*; **Darian Rodriguez Heyman** is a Senior Advisor to the United Nations' Global alliance for ICT and Development and serves on the Boards of Project Ahimsa, a global effort to empower children through music, and Natural World Museum (*Conference Facilitator*).

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