

In April 2009, the Pioneers program successfully completed its first phase in Amsterdam, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Directorate for Citizenship & Integration of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, and the Ministry for Youth and Families of The Netherlands.

The program brought together a group of recognized young leaders—from Amsterdam and from New York City—for a dialogue on how social innovators from different disciplines and cultures can work together to promote active citizenship in diverse, open cities such as Amsterdam and New York City.

The program participants, aged 25 to 40, were selected for their innovative thinking and outstanding professional accomplishments, and were drawn from a broad range of fields including academia, the arts, business, education, government, grassroots activism, media, and technology. The participants engaged in three days of in-depth discussion with one another and with noted experts from Amsterdam and New York City, exploring topics like free speech, race, the inclusion of minority youth in the political process, and the possibilities for stimulating community building and social integration through new technology. The Pioneers also shared the stage with Minister Frans Timmermans at a public celebration at Felix Meritis, bringing ideas and inspiration from their discussions to a broader audience.

It is clear from the success of the Amsterdam session and the weeks that have followed that the Pioneers are creative and highly motivated, and that this generation of young leaders is a rich resource that deserves a voice in the development of projects and policies dealing with urban and diversity issues.

The Pioneers have already shown a strong interest in working together, in close transatlantic collaboration, and are currently developing three project ideas that emerged from the Amsterdam session. The three principal project ideas are to:

- Engage minority and immigrant youth in Amsterdam and New York City in collecting little-understood cultural histories—and integrating those stories into the historical narratives taught in city classrooms;
- Use new media to empower minorities and immigrants to become more effective activists in their communities;
- Encourage governments to take greater risks in supporting innovative solutions to the challenges of urban diversity.

The Pioneers program will culminate in a final session in New York City on November 19 and 20, 2009 in which the Pioneers will present their final project ideas and discuss how their ongoing collaboration can engage a wider audience in working to improve civic life.

The session will also feature an exploration on the challenges of urban diversity with noted experts representing many perspectives: transatlantic experts, political leaders, social innovators, community organizers, and cutting edge thinkers. The session will also feature site visits to innovative grassroots organizations in all five boroughs, led by the Pioneers from New York City.

# Pioneers

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