

## YSP USA Delegates Attend the International Youth Assembly in Washington, D.C.

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From August 8 to 10, four delegates from Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) attended the International Youth Assembly hosted by the [Friendship Ambassadors Foundation](#) (FAF) in Washington, D.C. The three-day assembly brought together youth and young adults from around the world to participate in presentations and discussions by leaders of NGOs, businesses, governments and innovative projects. The FAF, in partnership with organizations like the United Nations, helps to promote [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and encourages young people to "be the change" and address issues in their own countries.



The YSP team consisted of Naria Gaarder and Ricky De Sena, both who work for YSP in New York City, Adelina Lazar, YSP Coordinator for Los Angeles, and John Koester, YSP Coordinator for Toronto, Canada. The team traveled from New York to Washington, D.C. on August 8. After exploring the city and visiting national landmarks during the day, the four YSP delegates attended the opening session of

the Youth Assembly held at Lisner Auditorium on the George Washington University Campus in the evening. The session began with inspirational speeches by Ami Dar of [idealist.org](http://idealist.org) and Shamil Idriss of [Search for Common Ground](http://SearchforCommonGround.org). Mr. Idriss stated that youth have always been the drivers of change.

Over the next two days, the YSP team participated in breakout sessions, networking and discussions. Panels covered topics such as climate change, how to make an impact through media, the issues of human rights across the globe, and the power and influence of young people.

"The most notable thing about the participating youth was how old they were, with most being in their teens," said Mrs. Gaarder. "This was inspiring to see and we were impressed with how they were already involved in their country's government and policy issues through their schools and in their communities at such a young age."

During the assembly, FAF officially launched the Global Action and Impact Network (GAIN), which allows assembly delegates who are interested in creating projects to connect to regional coordinators for mentorship and support. The last session of the three-day event wrapped up with multicultural performances, a multicultural fashion show and final words from the Executive Director of FAF, Dr. Andrew McDonald.

"Overall, it was very educational and was a great way to see what the UN, governments around the world and other NGOs are focusing on and how they are trying to address the different global issues," said Mrs. Gaarder. "The YSP group could also see how YSP and its founders' teachings can benefit from such gatherings and contribute to addressing global issues."

On Sunday morning the YSP team attended Sunday Service at the New Hope Family Church in Bowie, MD, where they shared about the Youth Assembly.



## Reflections

"The UN Youth Assembly was impressive for its diversity and for creating a platform where young people are encouraged to take initiative and where their efforts are recognized and rewarded. I felt really hopeful to see how youth are involved in politics and the decision-making process in their countries, taking ownership of environmental issues and are increasingly aware of global affairs." —Adelina Lazar, Los Angeles, CA

"I am more determined to invest our efforts on interreligious work in the Toronto community, but more importantly to tailor activities to the needs and more prevalent issues in our community. I will closely follow some of the projects of the YA to identify ones we could maybe replicate in Toronto. Moreover, I will liaison with other members of my community to work on partnering with like-minded groups." —John Koester, Toronto, Canada

"I gained a lot from this trip and would 100% recommend this trip to any other young leaders interested in plugging into and learning about international affairs." —Ricky De Sena, Elizabeth, NJ