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## Innovative Leadership Program Finds Solutions City's Problems

*By Gillian Granoff*

Recently, a group of bright ambitious young professionals, city officials, and representatives of the mayor's office were joined by prominent community le including Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav, of the New York City Departmen and Community Development and Commissioner Guillermo Liners of the May Immigrant Affairs, to celebrate the launch of the NYC Diversity Leadership Tr Program.

The program is a joint partnership of the NYC Department of Youth and Com Development, American-Israel Friendship League, the Cornell University Ex School (represented by Director Donald J. Tobias), The Simon Wiesenthal Ce York City Tolerance Center, and the New York City Department of Youth and Development. The goal of the project was to bring together 40 participants b ages of 25 and 35 to participate in educational workshops that address a var challenges facing the city. The predecessor of this program was a series of pi 2005, which brought together Hispanics and Israelis, to deconstruct stereoty bridges between the two communities.

The program's distinctiveness, Tobias explained, is its strategy to address ur through a "diverse lens. Once you embrace the idea of diversity...there's a n that comes when you integrate the elements of service, of scholarship, of the minds" and venture out of traditional classrooms into communities.

Commissioners Mullgrav and Liners offered words of inspiration and motivati candidates, selected by a very competitive process and representing a broad ethnic backgrounds and professions. From careers in international relations, entrepreneurs, to founders of non-for profit agencies dedicated to improving women and youth at risk, to employees of the United Nations, each brings cr leaderships skills to the table. The participants include natives of Zimbabwe, Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Korea, and Israel.

Commissioner Liners encouraged the participants to "think globally and act lc they learn about each other and develop sustainable projects to improve the share.

Sandy Weill, one of the program's founders, describes the program as provid platform for fostering mutual cooperation tolerance and understanding.

Over the course of six months the participants will take part in workshops de educate them and promote dialogue. The topics of the sessions cover a wide

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issues and skills that include immigration, public education diversity, project personal communication, economic development and public relations diversit development, personal communication, economic development and public re sessions will be lead by noted political, corporate and academic leaders who in the workshops in historically and political significant locations throughout t roster of illustrious speakers includes Chancellor Joel Klein, Peter Lobo of the Department of City Planning, Bridget Reagan the director of the Simon Wiese Center's New York Tolerance Center, and Albert Ruiz of the Daily News. If the résumés of the applicants are a reflection of success, the project is already w to meeting these goals.

Sanae Elhitmi, one of the candidates, a native of Morocco, works as a resear to the Assistant Secretary to the UN Security Council on Political Affairs. Afte from Baruch College with a degree in Finance, Sanae found herself dissatisfie idea of taking the safe path to success with a degree in business. Instead, sh pursue her passion for international and political affairs in a Masters Program International Relations which then led her to the United Nations in a career d correspondence and debriefing notes for Asia, Europe, the Middle East and th Sanae's own experience coming to the United States from Morocco at the ag her an appreciation for the richness and diversity of New York City and shape that every human is a "world citizen." Her hope is to use diversity as a point "to leverage the similarities between communities rather than the differences ambitions is to build a bridge between Muslim and Jewish communities, Arab Israelis. "My belief and hope is that through this program, we can capitalize o similarities using media including the arts, comedy, and music."

Despite her idealism she is realistic about the challenges of promoting tolera philosophy, she says, can be echoed by the words of Shirim Ebadi of Iran: "V important is that one utilizes one's intellect and to never be one hundred per about one's convictions; always leave room for doubt."

For more information or to apply to this program contact Kym Pitlor at [#](mailto:kpitlor@nyclp.org)

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