

**Cape Town Interfaith Initiative Schools Programme
The Marlene Silbert Youth Interfaith Intercultural Programme (MSYIIP)**

Background

Twenty years into the New South Africa and racial, cultural and socio-economic tensions still abound, fueled to a large extent by international conflicts. Many free-thinking teenagers seek to find their own solutions and form their own opinions through dialogue and forming friendships. Yet, due to the racially divided society in which we still live in South Africa, it is not always easy for young people to meet peers from different communities and get to know them in a safe environment.

In 2011, Mrs Marlene Silbert founded the Interfaith Intercultural Schools Programme with 5 schools, participating in monthly workshops at the different schools. These workshop sessions focus on building relationships based on humanity, equality, social justice, peace, reconciliation and respect for the dignity of difference. In this way learners begin to connect across social divides, and together creatively engage with building a better future.

Aims and Objectives

- To forge relationships on the basis of humanity, equality, and social justice
- To create a greater understanding of self and others, enhance self-esteem and self-development and empower young people to work actively towards transformation
- To respect people from different religions, faiths, cultures, and backgrounds and develop an appreciation of the value of diversity.
- To promote empathy, responsibility peace, social cohesion, conciliation and social activism
- To promote respect for human rights and human dignity
- To strive to combat all forms of prejudice and injustice

The programme is currently run in partnership between the [Cape Town Interfaith Initiative](#) and [GOAL \(Giving Opportunity to Aspiring Leaders\)](#), both are Cooperation Circles of URI.

>> Watch a recent [video of the Marlene Silbert Youth Intercultural Programme](#) from 2017. <<



Schools Represented in 2018

The Leadership College, Crystal House, Rylands High, Herzlia High, Spine Road High, Oude Molen Academy, Gardens Commercial, Sea Point High, Springfield Convent.

The Programme

Following the model below, we begin with the centre of the circle, giving the learners a strong sense of self, grounded them in who they are and beginning to unpack the way they view the world. This is done through a **4 day camp**, where the learners eat, work and play together, challenging each others minds and growing together. From this process relationships start to form, recognising commonalities across our perceived differences. This work is taken forward into the **monthly meetings**, where we continue the learning and engagement through interactive activities and dialogue sessions.



As part of the year programme, the learners also participate in 2 days of educational tours, **visiting the Holocaust Museum, the Slave Lodge and Robben Island**. Finally the learners also go on an **Interfaith tour, visiting different houses of worship**. All of this is part of the experience of learning together and building bonds across social divides. Through understanding our history, where we come from, and how we see the world differently, we can begin to heal the wounds of our past and work towards communities of peace.

Therefore these first two rings of the circle, allow for a strong foundation for the learners of interfaith peacebuilding, from which to then continue developing their leadership skills and moving towards action. For the Grade 11 year of the programme, learners initiate a community service project, tutoring to younger grades, or working within their communities. Many schools have also set up Peace Clubs in their school, which the Grade 10s lead, taking their learning from this programme directly back to their school.

Model of Interfaith Peacebuilding:



Outcomes:

- Sound and constructive investment in the youth, creating a pool of future leaders have a strong moral fibre, who are civic-minded, knowledgeable of their own and other cultures and religions, and respect the dignity of difference.
- Contributing to social upliftment by investing in role models who will influence their peers in the above values.
- The Interfaith, Intercultural Exchange Programme creates an exciting opportunity for collaboration and learning about social justice. The young people involved in this programme are encouraged to explore their school community, the community in which the school is located, and strive towards creating a more caring and compassionate and peaceful society. Each year we include additional schools and in so doing, more young people become empowered to make a meaningful difference to our society.



Extracts from evaluations completed by learners and teachers (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

What an incredible experience we have had. I have been at a Muslim school all my life and only had Muslim friends. This programme has broadened my vision, given me the opportunity to make new and wonderful friends from different religions and backgrounds – friendships which I will forever treasure. It has been so valuable. It has opened my mind and has taught me so many lessons that I will not forget for the rest of my life I am so grateful for this eye-opening experience. (Islamia College)

This was the first time I met Jewish people and it broke down all the stereotypes I had about Jews. I am ashamed of the attitudes I had towards them when I didn't even know any Jews. I have become a new and better person.

