

## INTERFAITH INSIGHTS

## How college campuses are proving we're 'better together'

**Note:** In 2012, MLive.com was a partner in the Year of Interfaith Understanding. The success of that project led to an ongoing effort to build interfaith understanding in Michigan. This column is one such effort. It is coordinated by Douglas Kindschi, director of the Kaufman Interfaith Institute at Grand Valley State University.

**By Katie Gordon**

Program Manager, Kaufman Interfaith Institute at GVSU

Today, I'd like to explore how the next generation of interfaith leaders is being mobilized across the country — and what the interfaith movement looks like on



Gordon

students and staff celebrating interfaith cooperation by pledging to be "Better Together" in their communities.

When I attended Alma College, I went to conferences hosted by the Interfaith Youth Core, an organization founded by Eboo Patel, and was taught and inspired by their mission. IFYC said we can all use our faith traditions, as well as our

college campuses.

This interfaith youth movement is culminating today, with thousands of university

nonfaith traditions, to inspire us to unite under common values to promote a greater good.

What really sold me on this model of interfaith work together over differences that easily could divide us. It's a simple philosophy: "Voice. Engage. Act." Here's what it means:

■ **Voice your values:** Use where you come from to inspire you to action and share that inspiration with others.

■ **Engage with others:** Share your distinct traditions and religious or philosophical beliefs in order to motivate

you under common values.

■ **Act together:** Use your values alongside others in order to make a difference in something important.

This model can be applied to any issue of social justice or peace; it simply suggests that if we are going to try to accomplish something, we might as well do it together. Not only because we are better together, but when we unite in a community, we are stronger together. If we are able to embrace each tradition's values, the impact will reach farther, dig deeper and, ultimately, make a bigger splash in these complex and challenging issues.

On Better Together Day,

one specific problem is being tackled by this growing youth movement: religious intolerance. Today, campuses across the country are using this model to stand up against discrimination in order to advocate for interfaith cooperation. Some are wearing blue in solidarity with the movement, others are engaging in community service projects and a Grand Valley State University class is hosting a Diversity & Dialogue roundtable discussion. Whatever the means, people are using their voices and presences to be louder than those who counter interfaith progress.

Today is about recognizing that religion should be used as

a force for good and a tool for peace. Further, it is about how all faith and nonfaith communities can come together to promote that value. These emerging interfaith leaders recognize this potential and will continue to promote it on their campuses and in their communities.

To learn more about the movement and Better Together Day, visit [ifyc.org/beblue](http://ifyc.org/beblue). It's only when we all come to appreciate the potential of using our distinct values to lead to common action that we can truly live in communities that realize a common good — by being better together.

Email: [interfaith@gvsu.edu](mailto:interfaith@gvsu.edu)