

PCD GRANT REPORT 2023-2024

**PREPARED BY:
TAHA VAHANVATY**



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Lara Schwartz
LARA SCHWARTZ
DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This grant program reflects our core beliefs: that dialogue can and should be infused throughout the university experience; that every community member can create opportunities for listening and speaking; and that we are at our best when we support efforts to grow a culture of dialogue at American University and beyond. Student dialogue facilitator and grant coordinator, Taha Vahanvaty, nurtured this program in its pilot year and gave our grantees individualized support to realize their goals. This report is a testament not only to our grantees' creativity and passion- but to Taha's efforts. I hope this report inspires people at AU and beyond to imagine new ways to engage across difference. I'm grateful for all the hard work that went into these projects and excited to see this program continue to grow.



Taha Vahanvaty
TAHA VAHANVATY
GRANT COORDINATOR

COORDINATOR'S NOTE

I ran an organization that taught civic dialogue to high schoolers called The Acceptance Project (TAP) from 2017-2022, and was constantly applying for grants that sought to support our mission. I am grateful that I am now in the position to award grants like those. Engaging and facilitating conversations across differences requires collaboration and teamwork. The eight projects we funded served unique communities that PCD would not have been able to access by ourselves. Furthermore, the grantee's utilized mediums ranging from traditional circle dialogues, to photography, podcasts, and research, diversifying our conceptualization of what dialogue looks like. Thank you to Professor Schwartz and Jennifer Martinez for their guidance and support, launching this project, and a special thank you to the grantees for their patience and passion throughout this voyage.



MISSION & VISION

The American University's Project on Civic Dialogue (PCD) Grant Program **aims to enhance dialogue and engagement within the campus community by funding initiatives that promote dialogue opportunities.** PCD's Grant Program bolsters dialogue opportunities on campus by providing faculty, staff, and students with an organized source of funding, guidance, audience/participation interest, and resources to ensure that people are engaged in recipients' projects/events.

The program was launched this year and assisted in funding and organizing eight diverse projects which aimed to further PCD's mission of furthering a culture of inquiry and civic dialogue on campus.



8

Grant Recipients

7,500

Dollars Awarded

CONVERSATIONS IN STEM

Project Lead: Yvette Nau

The inspiration for this project came from one of the PCD dialogue sessions in fall 2023. It was my first facilitated dialogue ever, and it was incredibly thought-provoking to sit down with a variety of students from across the university, holding conversations about weighty topics with people I'd never met before. I was inspired to bring this mindset into the STEM community, because it's something that we never have access to: in our lecture halls, content is essentially force-fed to us through slideshows and monologue lectures from professors. There is rarely the opportunity to bring any sort of real-world content or current events into the classroom, so my dialogues focused on fostering conversations about life among small groups of STEM students. **To read more about this project, and how it went, [please click here!](#)**



RESETTING THE TABLE

Project Lead: Naomi Fainchtein and *AU Hillel*

This semester, AU Hillel had the opportunity to run a fellowship called “Resetting the Table” (RTT). After October 7th, I could see how often Jewish students were coming up against difficult conversations. Without the skills to move through those conversations, they avoided them altogether or allowed them to devolve into relationship-ending arguments. We had 12 Jewish students participate in four sessions, spread out over February and March. These students represented different class years and different levels of involvement in Hillel. **To read more about this project and how it went, [please click here!](#)**

BEYOND THE BRANCH

Project Lead: Eagle Saner and Jae Baker

The objective of Beyond The Branch is to be a space on campus to host productive dialogues centered around campus problems and issues - where the current level of conversation has felt unsatisfying or insufficient. The goal was to base the dialogues around the responses we had received from previous engagements with the community. Additionally, one of the primary reasons we were interested in doing a podcast in the first place was the accessibility of the conversation. **To read more about this project and how it went, [please click here](#) and to listen to their pilot episode, [please click here](#).**



GLOBAL CONFLICTS & YOU

Project Lead: Rohan Singh

The idea of the event was to bring together students to have civil dialogue and try to heal some of the fractures that have come up in the AU community since October 7th. In the end, we had around 20 students, my mentor Professor Abu-Nimer, Dr. Wilkins -Provost, and Amy Dacey- Executive Director of the Sine Institute. **To read more about this project and how it went, [please click here](#) !**



SOUTH ASIAN STORIES

Project Lead: *AU SASA*

For the PCD Dialogue Grant Project, AU's South Asian Student Association chose to create spaces for important dialogue about conversations within the greater South Asian community and diaspora, which are often not talked about. At the end of this project, we managed to execute two of these dialogue events: one on discussing Domestic and Interpersonal Violence within the South Asian community in collaboration with Ashiyanna, and discussing the rise of Hindu Nationalism and Islamophobia in India and the US. **To read more about this project and how it went, [please click here!](#)**



CAMPUS FORUM PROJECT

Project Lead: Ethan Han

The vision was to create or start a platform for discussion and community connection across different communities on campus. The main objective was to address campus-wide issues such as community space, improving student organizations, or getting involved outside of one's major. **To read more about this project and how it went, [please click here!](#)**

BROTHERS AND BLOSSOMS

Project Lead: Trevaughn Ellis and
AU Brother Brother

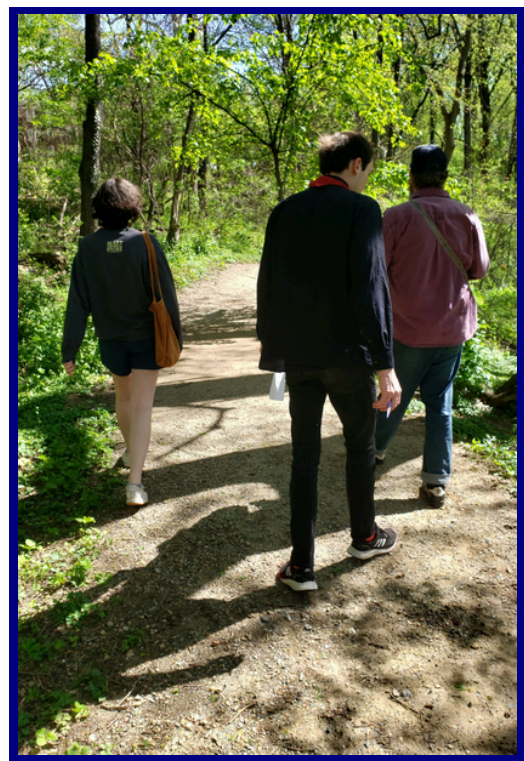
A photo speaks 1,000 words. A portrait captures one's individuality while also being an affirmation and acknowledgment of one's humanity. Having a Black Men's photoshoot accompanied by a discussion about the individual could bring our community together on a level of intimacy we have yet to breach. To read more about how this project went, please [click here for a report](#) and [here for a fabulous video summary](#).



INTRAFaITH CHRISTIAN DINNER & INTERFaITH NATURE OUTING

Project Lead: Melia Klinger and *AU Interfaith Club*

Having just co-founded the Interfaith Club last fall, I'm still new to this whole interfaith thing. As a club, we're still experimenting with the best ways to promote interfaith dialogue on campus. That's why we were thrilled to receive this grant, since it allowed us to try two different types of dialogue: an intrafaith Christian dinner and an outing to talk about spirituality and nature. I learned a lot about myself as a facilitator and the nature of interfaith dialogue by planning, executing, and reflecting on these events with help from PDC (especially Taha). **To read more about these projects and how they went, [please click here!](#)**



“

*I realized that dialogue doesn't just have to be about current events or other people: **it can be about yourself, your community, and the burdens and joys that you live through together.***

-Yvette Nau; “Conversations in Stem”



”

*People expect differences when engaging in interfaith dialogue and expect similarities when engaging in intra-faith dialogue. Realizing you are **NOT** as similar as you thought **makes intrafaith particularly challenging but all the more important.***

-Melia Klinger; “Intrafaith Christian Dinner & Interfaith Nature Outing”

“

***The setup and location of the dialogue felt magical.** Having the blossoms fall on a sunny day, to enjoy a picnic atmosphere with my brothers, to have a digital takeaway from the moment all felt magical.*

-Trevaughn Ellis; “Brothers and Blossoms”



QUOTES



STAY CONNECTED



[au.civic.dialogue](https://www.instagram.com/au.civic.dialogue)



[Check out our website](https://www.american.edu/civildialogue)



dialogueproject@american.edu