

Empowering Youth Voices

Around 50 people gathered on a rainy Saturday afternoon in the spirit of interfaith dialogue to discuss high impact issues pertinent to youth today and also to take a nourishing spiritual perspective.

This event was co-organised by the Brahma Kumaris (BK), Harrow Interfaith (HIF), and National Multifaith Youth Centre (NMYC) and was hosted by the Brahma Kumaris.

Following a welcome address from Georgina Long (BK), the event sprung off to a lively start with MC Alavari Jeevathol (AJ) who kindly introduced the NMYC, of which he is co-founder, why it was set up and its key aims.



Gopal Singh Bhachu (HIF) was requested to give opening remarks. He flagged up factors relevant to modern day living-questions we might have going forwards on clean energy, transport, sustainable living and asked the question, how quickly can we implement the changes we want to see?

AJ also introduced the themes for discussion in the afternoon and each group leader. The topics- as outlined below - were explored in a world cafe format, and facilitated by experts for each group discussion.





1. **The voice of the refugee** - exploring the narratives of those vulnerable and displaced peoples who have lost their home, their challenges, and triumphs (Led by **Susan Grace**)
2. **Personal strength and resilience** — delving into the essence of mental health and hygiene during periods of hardship. From where do we draw support? What are the various forms of true strength? (Led by **Polina Temponera**)
3. **Our reactions on social media** — how and why do we jump to conclusions when consuming info online? The implications of AI, bots, and emotionally charged oversimplifications of social justice issues. (Led by **Jeeves Rohilla**)
4. **Leadership in times of change** — Which leaders can we learn from now? Where are our leaders of the future? What do we want from them in times of heightened conflict, and how do we nurture them? (Led by **Alex Kyriacou-Drummond**)
5. **Managing eco-anxiety** - Climate change activism may not be what you think it is. This can be both encouraging and concerning for those worried about the future of this planet, and how they can get involved in fighting for a better future. (Led by **Joseph Gale Burns**)





Feedback from the discussions touched on diverse concerns voiced by the participants... ranging from the need for support, recognition of skills, access to essential services and recourse to funds – for the refugee voice; wanting world leaders to guide, not impose, experimenting with innovation and considering how to include young people more; having a structure to speak what is on one's mind, to connect to nature and listen, being cautious but also meditation to help people detach when navigating social media, so putting some distance between the content and the reader and finally some tips on developing qualities and strengths through meditation to build resilience.

It was a rich discussion in the room, and BK Gopi Patel, an experienced meditation teacher whose spiritual interest is in the field of leadership, reconciliation and harmony talked superbly about the mindful conversations that there is a need for. She encouraged everyone to become aware of what their particular inner battle is and topped her talk with a beautiful guided meditation from the heart and for the heart.





Susan Claydon, from the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, working with the - Week of Prayer for World Peace, 2024 team, gave a vote of thanks and highlighted that young people, if given responsibility, tend to come up trumps and we should consider how we can do this. When the week of world peace was initiated in 1974, it was a radical idea to have people from different faiths talking to each other, and innovation and trust and ‘praying’ together holds hope for the future.

It was a beautiful meeting of minds, ideas, hearts and ended with a group photo, a spiritual gift for each person and a sweet, a light supper provided by BKs and plans shared for upcoming special events in January, guided nature walks with Royal Park rangers – embodying the spiritual principles of being one with the Earth.