



Interfaith center to host diversity expert at annual meeting

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The faith line that divides young people can lead to conflict or cooperation.

The choice to cross the line can be shaped by education and exposure -- working with others of different faiths, said Eboo Patel, executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core.

The Chicago-based international nonprofit Patel founded brings young people of different religions together for dialogue and community service. It is active on at least 75 college campuses and has a global reach.

"We have a presence on six continents," said Patel, author of "Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation."

An American Muslim of Indian heritage, Patel will bring his message about engaging young people in religious pluralism to the Virginia Interfaith Center's annual meeting at the Library of Virginia on Nov. 13.

He is the keynote speaker.

"I'm excited to learn about the work of the interfaith center," Patel said. "It has a great reputation."

"I'm excited to share with the good people about the work of the global movement and bring some of the stories of that movement to the people there and learn their stories so I can share them."

Patel will speak at 7 p.m. He will also sign books at the Library of Virginia on Nov. 13 and at the Virginia Commonwealth University bookstore, 1111 W. Broad St., at 3:30 p.m. Nov. 14.

The center's meeting is free to the public, but seating is limited. To register, go to www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org or call (804) 643-2474.

The Rev. C. Douglas Smith, executive director of the Virginia Interfaith Center, said Patel is considered one of the leading voices on diversity in the world. Having a speaker of Patel's caliber is an honor, Smith said.

Patel, who spoke at the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Forum, will address how "young diverse communities of faith are not only active but they are the next generation of social innovators," Smith said.

An online panelist for the "On Faith" blog co-hosted by the Washington Post and Newsweek, Patel will speak for about 45 minutes and then answer questions.

Joining Patel will be Del. G. Glenn Oder, R-Newport News, and Newport News businessman Ward R. Scull III. They are recipients of the center's Advocate of the Year awards for their work promoting economic opportunities for low-income Virginians and the creation of fair consumer credit markets.

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