



1. First Freedom Foundation
2. 174 N. Main Street #12, Salt Lake City, UT 84103
3. Currently in the process of obtaining non-profit status
4. Grassroots advocacy
5. [patricepederson.com](http://patricepederson.com) (Please note my deep level of experience with public/private partnerships and also my expertise in trans-organizational collaboration.)
6. We have never partnered with the U.S. Government before.
7. This plan is currently still a new idea

I will participate in the fall  
three-day accelerator program in or  
around Washington, D.C.  
Patrice J. Pederson

8.

### **Proposal Information:**

#### **Problem Statement**

The problem is that there is no real global, grassroots movement for religious freedom. The effort mostly consists of attorneys, academics, and advocates, but the public rarely pays attention.

We need a public information campaign to demonstrate that freedom of religion or belief is foundational to all other freedoms. Right now people see religious freedom as being important for Yazidis or the Rohingya--people who live in situations so different that they are difficult to imagine, or people who refuse to bake cakes for gay weddings which is also difficult for most to relate to. People need to understand how freedom of religion or belief touches everything for everyone--gay or straight, conservative or liberal, atheist, Christian, or Muslim.

In terms of innovation, according to Clayton Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation, the current religious freedom movement in the US and Western Europe is following the Blockbuster Video model perfectly. They are developing their "product" (religious freedom advocacy) to appeal mainly

to highly specific needs of their most valuable “customers” (Christians morally opposed to LGBT weddings). The problem is that they are niche marketing themselves into obsolescence because there is little attempt to appeal to new customers (millennials, atheists, SBNRs) and their existing customers are literally dying.

## **Idea**

We will incubate and accelerate a global grassroots movement, starting by hosting an innovation summit to gather young people from around the world to collaboratively create a master strategy. Before and during the summit participants will work together to design new initiatives to appeal to a young and diverse audience. Then at the end of the summit we will host a YouTube live event to crowdfund the best projects.

Working in partnership with the U.S. and other governments, thought-leaders, and celebrities will help the project by raising the profile of the global gathering. More than anything, millennials want to feel like they matter. Perhaps because of decreased religiosity, they are hungrier for meaning in their lives than previous generations. We can help provide this meaning by positioning this summit as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to truly have an impact in the world.

This aligns with U.S. interests because it will a) recommit Americans to the first amendment by communicating how all freedoms are meaningless if people can not speak, write, assemble, etc. according to the dictates of our own consciences—that our first freedoms are a package deal. Secondly, it will promote these values abroad because we will be recruiting young people from every country we can to help us strategize ways to spread this message in their home countries.

## **Resource Requirements**

In terms of feasibility, this is a very practical strategy to move the needle. The main cost will be travel for the international participants, but as fundraising campaigns go, sponsoring a kid from a developing country to come to America to learn about freedom is about as good as they get. Pepperdine University's campus has excellent and inexpensive conference and dorm facilities, and their Malibu location will help to attract government leaders, thought leaders, and celebrities.

Besides our status-raising partners the stakeholders we most need buy-in from are the young people themselves. To recruit ideal candidates we will network with international organizations, but in regions where these don't exist we will use twitter and facebook targeted advertising to reach our demographic.

A legal challenge will be visas for young people from countries from which the U.S. requires visas. Partnering with the State Department would be a tremendous help with this process. But where this can not be accomplished, we will recruit students already living in the U.S.

## **Best Potential Partners**

So far on the host committee I have Cole Durham of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, and Tina Ramirez of Hardwired Global. I am reaching out to Clayton Christensen, the Harvard business professor and innovation expert, Kelly Patterson, author of Crucial Conversations, and Paul Allen, CEO of Strengths Inc. I'm also using my networks to approach President Macri of Argentina, and am considering whether or not to loop in the Qatari royal family whom I have worked with in the past.

We would of course want to invite key religious leaders and already have the networks to do that.

We have a few partnership needs. First, I would love to work with liberal U.S. politicians. I assume that Vice President Pence will want to participate, but due to the current climate of polarization we would want his participation to be balanced by some high profile Democrats. I'm not sure if President Obama would be open to this but I would love to have him. Secondly, I could use help identifying additional foreign heads of state who might be amenable. Finally we need to identify some "Atheist prophets" who would be supportive of freedom of belief.

This part isn't exactly State's bailiwick, but we are also looking to partner with celebrities. Already I have a good relationship with Eduardo Verastegui who has a huge following in Latin America, but ideally we will be able to identify some more internationally-known celebrities who support FORB.

### **Ideal End State**

In the end, we should have at least a half-dozen new initiatives to promote religious freedom in the U.S. and around the world. I expect these initiatives to be grassroots-oriented and leverage newer technologies such as social media and film. The First Freedom Foundation will continue after the summit as a type of backbone support organization to facilitate collaboration between existing organizations as well as the new ones created by the summit.

Ultimately the goal of all of the initiatives is to educate the public about the foundational importance of religious freedom. Without freedom of religion or belief for all, the LGBT community could not have their pride parades, the academic community could not have their intellectual freedom, and even the rights of majority religions are in peril.



