



First Freedom Innovation Summit

Building a Global Movement for Religious Freedom

Freedom of religion or belief is the foundation of all freedoms, as indicated by its placement as the first phrase of the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution. All other freedoms are void if we can not speak, write, assemble, etc. according to the dictates of our own consciences. And yet, in spite of its importance, multiple forces are eroding this first freedom:

- Young people do not identify with the term “religious”
- Government is growing, ever encroaching on individuals, families, and churches
- LGBTQ activists perceive religious freedom as a front for bigotry
- Technology is creating social silos and partisanship is dividing the public
- Many religious faithful refuse to acknowledge other beliefs as equally worthy of religious freedom

At this critical juncture, we have two options. We can treat this like a strictly political problem and react defensively in court or in capitals every time religious freedom is threatened, until an overwhelming lack of public support results in the loss of the legal protections we now have, and then spend many years and billions of dollars trying to regain lost ground. Or we can be proactive now in educating and activating the public to restore freedom of religion or belief to its place of supremacy.

Like an orchestra comprised of many instruments, successful social movements require multiple different approaches each focused on one portion of the problem but working together. Right now the religious freedom effort is mostly academics and lawyers, like trumpets and drums playing at one another. To create a real movement we need some grassroots, like a string section! We also need targeted efforts like harps and tambourines. And we *must* play for an audience.

In June 2019, the First Freedom Foundation will host an Innovation Summit. We will gather young people from around the world, along with current leaders in the field, to jointly create a strategy for success. 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.

This approach has many strategic advantages, including:

- 1) We will simultaneously craft a comprehensive strategy that keeps the big picture in mind while also supporting individuals and organizations in focusing on their unique areas of expertise
- 2) High-level religious, political, and academic leaders will be motivated to participate to influence the direction of the new movement
- 3) The projects are more likely to appeal to a younger demographic because they will have been developed by young people themselves, while also benefiting from the experience of current leaders in the field

Religious freedom is the issue of our time. To pass the liberties we enjoy along to future generations we must teach young people both why religious freedom is important as well as how to protect it. And this will require more innovation and collaboration than we have ever before attempted. The alternative is to keep doing what we have been doing until the flame of freedom dies out.

Team (so far)

Patrice Pederson has over 20 years of experience in the international pro-family movement, including as President of the International Family Caucus and Executive Director of the World Congress of Families IX. She is currently working on a master's thesis in trans-organizational collaboration at Pepperdine University.

Chandra Brown-Hendren has worked both as adjunct faculty and on the curriculum committee as Vice President of Administration at George Wythe University. She also did media relations for Proposition 8 in California in 2008 and has created various events and programs for youth and adults.

Tina Ramirez is the founder of Hardwired Global, which trains indigenous leaders how to defend themselves and those around them. She has also served as a policy researcher at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, as director of international programs at The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, and as a foreign policy advisor for various members of the U.S. Congress where she helped found and direct the bipartisan Congressional International Religious Freedom Caucus.

W. Cole Durham, Jr is the founder and director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University. A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, Durham has had a distinguished career in comparative constitutional and church-state law. He currently serves as president of the International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies based in Milan, Italy, and is co-editor-in-chief of the *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*.

The Religious Freedom Movement as an Orchestral Seating Chart



