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"The only way to bring about the future we seek is if we're willing to work together as one nation and one people."
President Barack Obama

PRESS RELEASE

**LAUNCH OF DIGITAL MULTI-MEDIA SOCIAL ACTION INITIATIVE TO COMBAT
MUSLIM STEREOTYPES & UNITE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

Red Carpet Premiere featured Film Contest, Community Ambassadors & \$200,000 in Grants

CHICAGO – One Nation with The Chicago Community Trust, Link TV, Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) today launched the multi-media initiative *One Chicago, One Nation* at a Red Carpet Premiere in downtown Chicago at the Chicago Cultural Center.

One Chicago, One Nation is a first-of-its-kind regional initiative and national model that promotes pluralism and inclusion to engage a representation of the Chicago area's 400,000 Muslims with other culturally diverse residents as a critical step toward overcoming ongoing tensions.

A national Gallup Poll released in 2006 identified the key to combating racism and fear toward the Muslim community is through face-to face meetings between Muslims and non-Muslims. The *One Chicago, One Nation* initiative focuses on personal interaction using storytelling as a primary tool for dispelling cultural misperceptions and building trust.

"*One Chicago, One Nation* will set a new precedent for positively engaging the diversity of a major urban center," said **Eboo Patel, executive director, Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)**. "By breaking down barriers and building bridges to unite our diverse neighbors, we can create a stronger Chicago community and serve as an important national model."

"The role of storytelling is incredibly important in developing strong relationships across religious, cultural and socio-economic boundaries," said **Rami Nashashibi, executive director, Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)**. "Through storytelling and dialogue we can better understand one another and the common values that unite us so that we may move forward together as a stronger community."

Harnessing the power of diversity, the *One Chicago, One Nation* initiative will:

- **Film Contest:** Launch an online film contest, hosted by Link TV, awarding \$50,000 in prizes for stories illustrating Chicagoland neighbors working together to achieve common goals;



- **Community Ambassador Program:** Mobilize Community Ambassadors – made up of hundreds of Chicagoland residents, students, and community leaders – to flood communities with social dialogue to build trust;
- **Action Grants:** Fuel neighborhoods with \$200,000 in targeted grants for trust- and community-building projects that sustain interfaith and intercultural partnerships.

“Chicago is the third largest city in the United States, and we know how critical it is to build unity in our region by fighting the stereotypes that will divide us as a community and as a nation,” said **Terry Mazany, president and CEO, The Chicago Community Trust**. “We must meet one another one-on-one, talk with each other, understand each other’s differences and commonalities. It is only by harnessing the power of our diverse communities that we build our strength. America’s legacy as a melting pot serves as the foundation for our great democracy. Extremists exist everywhere...what we must not allow is for them to divide and conquer through their hate.”

FILM CONTEST USES STORYTELLING TO SPARK DIALOGUE ON COMMON VALUES

The **One Chicago, One Nation** Film Contest, hosted by Link TV, launched today will award \$50,000 in prizes for stories, based in or around Chicago, that demonstrate diverse individuals or groups working together in their communities. Individuals throughout the country can begin submissions of short films of up to five minutes in length online at www.linktv.org/onechicago. Submissions will be accepted from **Thursday, January 14 through Friday, April 23, 2010**.

“Film is a critical communications medium of our age with the power not only to capture an audience’s attention but also to make us relate to the stories we see and hear,” said **Wendy Hanamura, vice president, general manager, Link TV**. “Everyone is a story teller and can add value to this important cross-cultural dialogue.”

Winning films will be used to spark community dialogue about shared values, goals and the power of communities working together. They also will be televised on Link TV and posted online at www.linktv.org/onechicago (except for Mobile Digital Media).

FILM CONTEST JUDGES

The general public can vote online for finalists in six film categories and a panel of celebrity judges will select category winners. This years judges to date include: **Harry Belafonte, Bill Kurtis, Azhar Usman, Krista Tippett, Greg M. Epstein, Dr. Aminah McCloud, Skye Jethani, Rabbi Caper C. Funnye, Jr., and Steve Edwards**. Winners will be publicly announced at a ceremony in Chicago’s Millennium Park on Thursday, June 17, 2010. The grand prize-winner will be awarded \$20,000, and each of the six film category winners receives \$5,000. Film categories and submissions details can be obtained online: www.linktv.org/onechicago.

COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS BY SHARING PERSONAL STORIES

One Chicago, One Nation will begin by recruiting and training 100 new and experienced leaders as Community Ambassadors to facilitate interfaith and intercultural discussion and initiate collaborative community service projects. Community Ambassadors will organize and facilitate community conversations, share stories that will break down barriers, connect neighbors, build awareness of shared values, and encourage community collaboration on common goals.



“If we are to be one nation, it is vital we end the disparagement of people of different faiths and cultures, including American Muslims,” said **Henry Izumizaki, ceo, One Nation**. “**One Chicago, One Nation** takes a sweeping, yet resolute approach to provide people with numerous opportunities to talk with one another and tell stories that will nullify misperceptions. That way we can move forward, united as one strong community.”

Community Ambassadors will serve as liaisons to create greater awareness of ongoing projects and potential solutions for community issues and to connect strong local initiatives with audiences in civic, business, and government institutions.

ACTION GRANTS FUEL COMMUNITY-BUILDING PROJECTS

In order to sustain the ongoing efforts identified by Community Ambassadors, \$200,000 in Community Solution Grants will be awarded over the next two years for projects to encourage cross-community collaboration and action toward a common goal. A total of 20 grants of \$10,000 each will be distributed over a period of two years to stimulate dialogue and build bridges across diverse Chicagoland communities.

“The One Chicago, One Nation community-building grants provide the unique opportunity to create and more importantly, sustain programs that significantly elevate neighbor interaction, inspire focused dialogue, and empower individuals and communities to build trust in one another,” said **Mazany**.

Today’s launch, attended by several hundred community, government, and business leaders, was moderated by veteran journalist **Bill Kurtis** and **Rev. Patricia Watkins** at the Chicago Cultural Center and it featured numerous national and local celebrities including performances by international comedian, **Azhar Usman**; poet, **Kevin Coval**; **DJ David Chavez**; and live music by **Seneke Ensemble** and **Duzan Ensemble**.

One Chicago, One Nation: One Nation, a philanthropic collaborative, has partnered with The Chicago Community Trust, Link TV, Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) and Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN), to develop in Chicago a nationally replicable civic engagement initiative that brings together diverse local communities to work with common purpose for the common good to uphold America’s promise of liberty and justice for all. For more information visit www.onechicago-onenation.org.