



MANY PEOPLE, MANY FAITHS, ONE NATION:

# What is Religious Pluralism?

**Religious pluralism** is a vision of the world in which diverse religious communities and non-believers engage each other in beneficial ways, maintain their distinct identities, and thrive and defend each others' right to thrive. To achieve that vision, many component pieces need to be in place.

This is an **outline of religious pluralism's components**, with explanations and real-world examples. These components are mutually reinforcing, and together, they form the system of religious pluralism.

Examples reflect the work of various practitioners in the field. Based on our preliminary mapping of religious pluralism, **the components are intentionally broad and inclusive**. We hope they will be helpful guideposts.

Religious pluralism relies on individuals having a basic understanding of religions, which allows citizens to engage more effectively and find common values with people of all faiths and no faith.

#### EXAMPLES:

- Tanenbaum advancing religious literacy in professions through religious diversity and literacy trainings for specific industries
- Harvard's Religious Literacy Project training teachers how to address religious contexts in their classrooms

**Diversity,  
Equity,  
and Inclusion**

Including faith orientation in DEI thinking brings to bear all the benefits of true diversity, equity, and inclusion acknowledged for other poles of identity. Religious DEI means respecting and understanding individual religious observance and allowing individuals to be their whole selves.

#### EXAMPLES:

- The Jews of Color Field Building Initiative providing research on the racial diversity of American Jewish communities

**Religious  
Literacy**

**Thriving  
Religious  
Communities**

Religious pluralism relies on the presence of many diverse faith communities with good leadership, sustainable institutions, and leaders and congregants knowledgeable about their own doctrines and traditions.

#### EXAMPLES:

- American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute at USC training community members to become community leaders
- Orthodox Union Impact Accelerator providing capacity building support for top Jewish nonprofits

Religious pluralism relies on minority communities telling their own stories in media like journalism, literature, and television, so their diverse and multi-faceted stories become part of the American narrative.

#### EXAMPLES:

- Dancing Earth Creations performing and creating indigenous cultural and religious arts
- Seftel Productions creating *Secret Life Of Muslims* to represent American Muslims with humor and empathy

**Diversity in  
Media and  
Representation**

**Religious  
Freedom**

Religious pluralism relies on every person feeling the guarantee of equal rights and freedoms to worship, or not, according to their conscience, as well as the guarantee that no one individual or community can force their faith orientation on any one else.

#### EXAMPLES:

- The Religious Freedom & Business Foundation launching a Corporate Pledge, which encourages companies to ensure working conditions and policies do not put employees at odds with their religious convictions.
- The Sikh Coalition providing legal support for those suffering religious discrimination

Hate speech and hate crimes bring a cycle of fear to whole communities, prompting them to withdraw into closed spaces, further sequestering them from society, and preventing their inclusion. The prevention of these activities allows religious pluralism to thrive.

#### EXAMPLES:

- The After Charlottesville Project exploring how to address intolerance
- Shoulder-to-Shoulder organizing against Islamophobia

**Hate Speech  
and Hate Crime  
Prevention**

**Multifaith and  
Intrafaith  
Engagement**

Religious pluralism relies on meaningful connection around lines of faith difference to build shared bridges, deepen understanding, and develop critical skillsets for democratic engagement in a religiously, ideologically, and demographically diverse society.

#### EXAMPLES:

- The Interfaith Youth Core promoting interfaith dialogue for college students
- The Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom uniting Muslim and Jewish women through their annual programming