

Stories of Social Change

SPIRITUALITY IN ACTION



*A catalog of the
multimedia exhibit
presenting the narratives
of changemakers*

USC Dornsife
*Center for Religion
and Civic Culture*

Project Overview

Invitation to Host the Exhibit

A global team of journalists and researchers at the University of Southern California produced more than 100 stories about people dedicated to working for positive social changes as part of the Spiritual Exemplars Project. Often underreported and unseen, spiritual impulses can move individuals and communities toward justice, equality and compassion.

“Stories for Social Change: Spirituality in Action” is a multimedia exhibit that presents the narratives of these changemakers. It was originally presented at the USC Annenberg for Communication and Journalism, educating and inspiring 2,500 people in Fall 2023.

Who is a spiritual exemplar?

This exhibit is part of “Spiritual Exemplars: A Global Project on Engaged Spirituality.” From 2018 to 2023, the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) commissioned stories about 104 spiritual exemplars.

CRCC defined a spiritual exemplar as:

- A living individual located anywhere in the world
- Inspired and sustained by spiritual values, beliefs or practices
- Significant impact that advances human flourishing
- Admired and emulated by others within and beyond their community
- Respects human rights, such as those defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The exhibit is available for presentation in educational, civic, religious and communal spaces. The content can be adapted to different spaces and audiences.

Available Exhibit Assets

1 Exhibit Introduction Board and Word Cloud

2 (61) Photos with Captions

Spirituality

Places of Worship
Prayer and Ritual
Nature

In Action

(7) Beneficiary Photos with Quotations
(9) Photos with Captions
(10) Text Boards with Social Change Metrics

Two Story Walls

Each story includes 9 photos, captions and context displays

14 Banners

(33) Fabric Banners
Quotations from Spiritual Exemplars
(5) Exemplar Portrait Mosaics

16 Berndt Archive

Black and White Photographs with Captions

17 Multimedia

Exhibit Contact

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Explore
the Exhibit

SPIRITUALITY



EXHIBIT PIECES

Mounted on foamcore

Context Board


36 x 24 inches

Photo Images

with Corresponding Caption Cards

- (12) 12 x 18 inches
- (7) 20 x 30 inches
- (3) 16 x 12 inches
- (2) 25 x 20 inches
- (1) 20 x 20 inches
- (2) 30 x 20 inches

Stories of Social Change

**SPIRITUALITY
IN ACTION**


Spirituality

In the act of responding to a human need, one is drawn into a deeper understanding of religion and moral values. Religion can *inspire* people to engage in humanitarian work. It can *sustain* them when facing difficult issues. The work also can *transform* the individual and affect their understanding of theology, spirituality and humanitarianism.

On this floor, explore how humanitarians and activists draw on the traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Humanism, Indigenous beliefs and more.

Exhibit presented by
USC Annenberg
School for Government
and Leadership

USC Dornsife
Center for Religion
and Civic Culture







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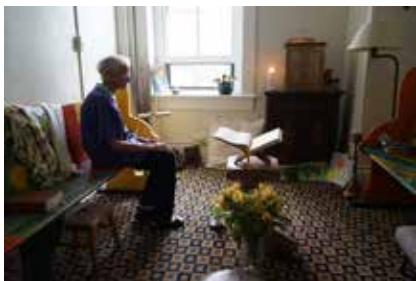
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Photos are grouped thematically around various aspects of spiritual exemplars' spiritual lives: places of worship, congregation, ritual, prayer and nature.

QR codes on captions lead to audio and video that allow viewer to see and hear the rituals and spiritual lives of the exemplars.



12



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17



18



19

Sample caption card (photograph 23)

Peace activist **Sameer** (pseudonym) screams into the void, a spiritual practice he uses to surrender his pain to the emptiness of the desert.

Palestine, 2019
Photograph by Shaina Shealy



23



24



14



15



16



20



21



22



25



26



27

IN ACTION



EXHIBIT UNITS

Mounted on foamcore

Photo Images with Corresponding Caption Cards

In Action Photos

(4) 12 x 18

(1) 18 x 12

(4) 20 x 30

Text Boards with Social Change Metrics

(10) 16 x 21-28 inches

Beneficiary Stories with Images

(7) 26 x 20 inches

Stories of Social Change



**SPIRITUALITY
IN ACTION**

In Action

Activists, peace builders, humanitarian workers. Often surrounded by supportive communities, these people **contribute to social change** across sectors. They provide basic needs, deliver life-saving medical care, support vulnerable groups, protest against inequalities, change laws, preserve cultures and care for the earth.

On this floor, **explore the impact** of people across the globe whose spirituality inspires them to tackle our world's most urgent issues.

Exhibit presented by

USC Annenberg
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and Journalism

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and Civic Culture





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SOCIAL CHANGE METRICS

various sizes:
16 x 21 inches
16 x 26 inches
16 x 28 inches

Sister Mary Scullion
heads Philadelphia's *Project HOME*, which operates
900 housing units
and runs job and education projects.

Kushil Gunasekera started *Foundation of Goodness*, which has served more than
400,000 people
in **400 villages**
in Sri Lanka with its holistic model of rural empowerment.

The Gwich'in Steering Committee is fighting to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's
1.5-million-acre
coastal plain from oil and industrial development.

Fachruddin Mangunjaya has trained clerics at more than
30 schools
in Indonesia to promote wildlife conservation, forestry and climate change awareness.

Chao-hwei Shih performed the **first Buddhist same-sex wedding** in Taiwan in 2012, 7 years before it would be legalized in the country.

Jenifer Colpas Fernández and her organization, *Tierra Grata*, have provided ecological toilets, solar lamps and water filters to more than **20,000 people** in the most remote communities in Northern Colombia.

Father Mussie Zerai has helped rescue more than **150,000 distressed migrants** from the Mediterranean Sea over the past 20 years.

Tahirih Justice Center, founded by **Layli Miller-Muro**, has provided free legal defense to **27,000 women** fleeing human rights abuses.

Rachel Sumekh is behind *Swipe Out Hunger*, which has served more than **2 million meals** to food insecure college students.

Zannah Mustapha started **4 schools** with **40 classrooms** for orphans and vulnerable children in Borno, the Nigerian state where Boko Haram has killed nearly 1,000 teachers.



“The importance of prayer in Islam is clear. No one has an excuse for not praying — you can pray in any place and in any form, even when you are on the move or seeking asylum — but coming here to the shelter I finally felt safe to pray. To seek God. To pray next to my brothers. I can’t tell you how much that means after such a long journey.”

Hamza, a migrant in the shelter Albergue Assabil at the US-Mexico border, established by **Sonia Tinoco Garcia**
 Photograph by Ken Chitwood

1



“We want to become ambassadors of tolerant Islam and dispel people’s ignorance about religion when we go back home.”

Kulbali Aminata, a student of an imam training program in Morocco, where **Ahmed Toufiq** teaches
 Photograph by Priyadarshini Sen

2

BENEFICIARY WALL

(7) Photos with Quotations
 26 x 20 inches



10



“The government underfunds and neglects prisons in Nepal. Other than voluntary organizations such as Prisoner’s Assistance Nepal, there is no resource for our inmates.”

Rajendra Niraula, head jailer at Jhapa District Jail, on the activities of **Indira Ranamagar**’s organization
 Photograph by Mary Annette Pember

5



“Many of us have never experienced one simple ‘I love you’ in our homes. But through Education and Hope, we know we have value.”

Jenny, who graduated from Berea College in the US, on an educational program that **Julie Coyne** established in Guatemala
Photograph provided by Education and Hope

3



After 17 years of legal fights, “We finally have the collective concession, thanks God. Now it is up to the communities to take care of our water since our rights are already fulfilled.”

Alejandro Pérez, a Zapotec community member who worked with **Carmen Santiago Alonso** to protect communal water rights in Oaxaca, Mexico
Photograph by Noel Rojo

4



“One time when Tierra Grata came to El Silverio, it was raining and the road was all muddy. Jenifer did not complain, she took off her shoes and continued barefoot. If she could find a solution to achieve her goals, why cannot we women from the village?”

Sandra Campo, a displaced woman from Colombia, talking about **Jenifer Colpas Fernández**
Photograph by Noel Rojo

6



“It was at the Nikozi Art School that my teacher introduced me to classical music and the works of Bach and Mozart. Without the school, I wouldn’t have become a musician.”

Giorgi Magradze, a former student of folk music and piano at the Nikozi Art School founded by **Zarab Tchanturia** in Georgia
Photograph by Julien Peberf

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SPIRITUALITY IN ACTION

Marie Stella Kouak

Sister Marie Stella Kouak, a nurse, established Living in Hope in 1999 to assist those who suffered from HIV/AIDS. As antiretroviral therapy was not available in Togo until 2006, she spent her first years organizing funerals and trying to provide a dignified death to those treated as outcasts.

Now one of the largest nonprofit organizations in Northern Togo, Living in Hope distinguishes itself by adopting a holistic approach to fighting HIV/AIDS.

Living in Hope runs two orphanages and supports 1,850 children living in foster families. It also operates a shop, a sewing workshop and a farm that generates income for the charity. In 2017, a new health center was inaugurated, and in 2020, a primary school was established.

Kouak wakes up at 4:15 am for an hour of peaceful prayer and prays for an hour at noon in the midst of a packed schedule. "As a woman of faith, I cannot give in to discouragement," she says.

Text by Clément Girardot
Photographs by Julien Pebel



1



STORY

Photo images with caption cards

(8) 16 x 24 for each of two stories
with introduction photo and context board





WALLS



**SPIRITUALITY
IN ACTION**

Tuenjai Deetes

Thailand has one of the largest numbers of stateless people in the world.

Thai human rights and environmental activist Tuenjai Deetes established Hill Area Development Foundation, which helps the stateless population gain Thai citizenship, runs education programs and supports activities of environmental protection in Northern Thailand.

“I want every human being to have dignity, to have equal rights by the law and to participate in social development. And I also wish for all human beings to live with nature peacefully and mutually,” says Deetes.

As a former member of the National Legislative Assembly and a National Human Rights Commissioner, Deetes has initiated various amendments of laws and regulations for naturalization. Partially thanks to her work, more than 90,000 people received their Thai citizenship in recent years.

A dedicated Buddhist, Tuenjai Deetes treats people with loving-kindness, and makes an effort every day to help at least one person.

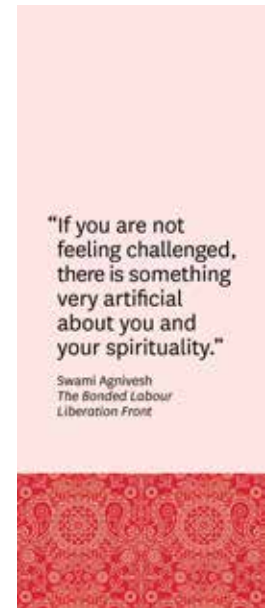
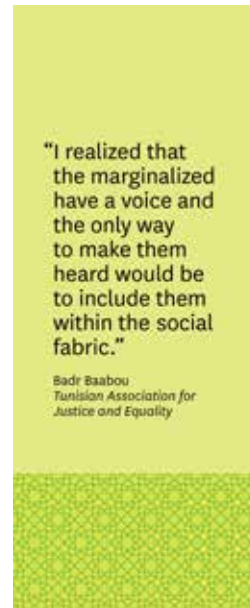
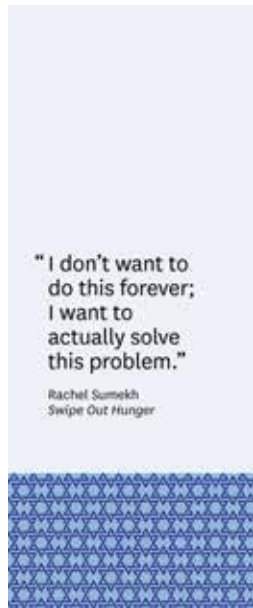
Text by Magdalena Rojo
Photographs by Noel Rojo



2



BANNERS



33 Fabric Banners

Quotations from spiritual exemplars are displayed on 3.5 x 1.5 foot banners. They can be displayed on walls or hung freely from the ceiling. Patterns on each fabric banner hanging in the gallery represent the faith tradition of the exemplar quoted.



African
Traditional Faith



Buddhism



Catholicism



Protestant
Christianity



Hinduism



Humanism



Mayan
Cosmivision



Islam



Jainism



Judaism



Indigenous
Religions

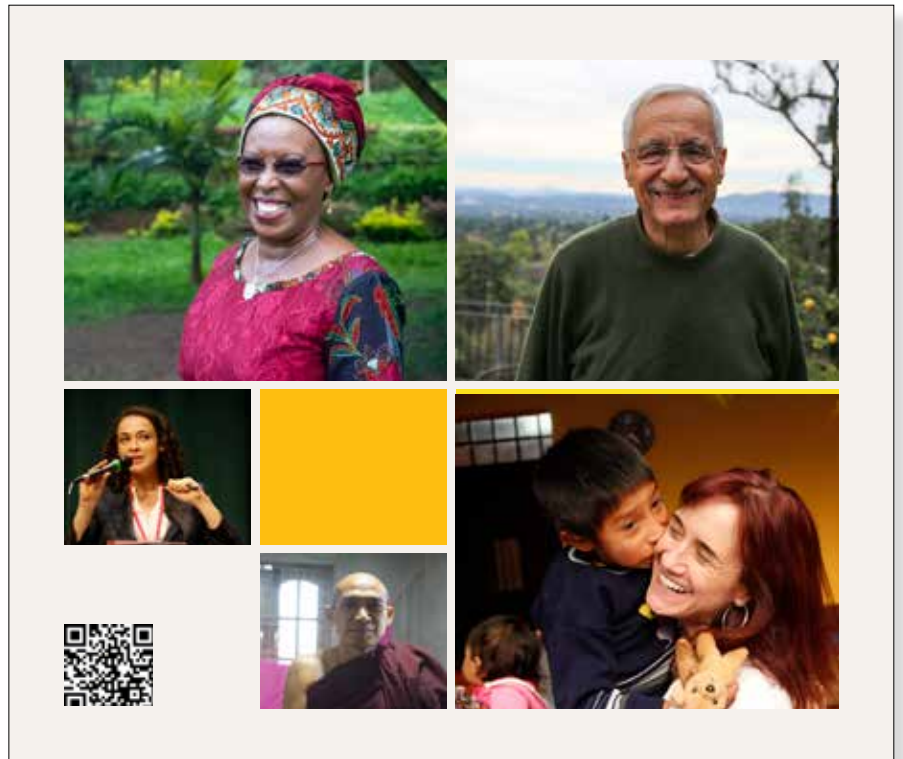


Old Norse

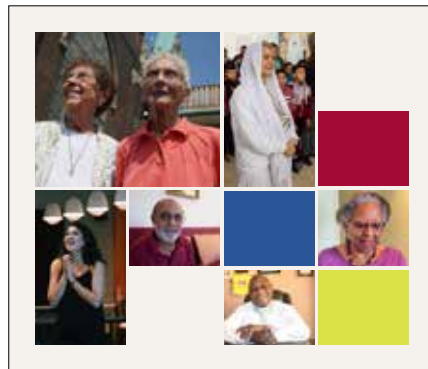
Exemplar Portrait Mosaics

5 panels
47 x 40 inches
printed on vinyl
with grommets

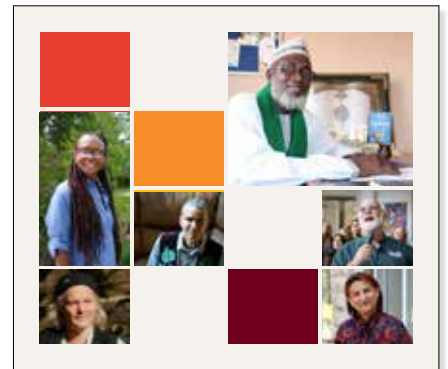
The QR code links viewers to an interactive map where they can explore the stories of all 104 exemplars featured in the project.



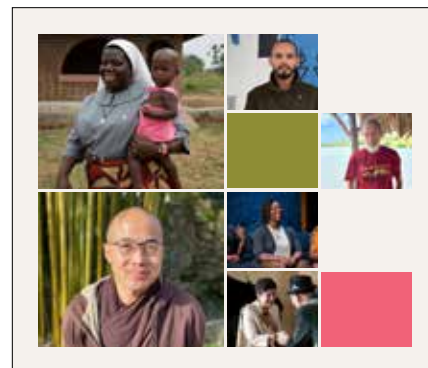
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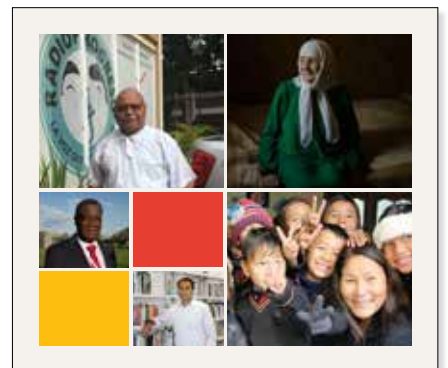
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SPIRITUALITY IN ACTION

The USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) has studied the local faith community's efforts to create change since the aftermath of Los Angeles' 1992 Civil Unrest. In the 1990s, photographer Jerry Berndt (deceased 2013) documented the worship and civic activities of congregations for "The Soul of Los Angeles" exhibit, including two spiritual exemplars: **Rev. Cecil L. Murray** and **Father Greg Boyle, SJ**.

Berndt later traveled with CRCC's cofounder Donald E. Miller to Rwanda, where he recorded the impact of the 1994 genocide of 800,000 Tutsi people, and exemplar **Jean Gakwandi's** efforts to comfort survivors.

Jerry Berndt's photographs appeared in major magazines and are included in several permanent collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York City.



BERNDT ARCHIVE



The USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture holds two exhibits created by renowned photographer Jerry Berndt:

The Soul of Los Angeles exhibit contains 100 black and white photographs (18" x 22" in black metal frames)

The Orphans of Rwanda exhibit contains 43 black and white photographs (16" x 20" images framed to 20" x 24")



MULTIMEDIA

The “Stories for Social Change: Spirituality in Action” exhibit website allows visitors to go deeper into the worlds depicted in the photographs.

QR codes on context boards and captions link viewers to audio and video content.

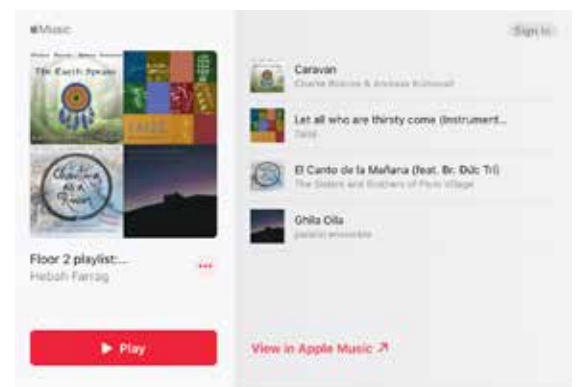


crcc.usc.edu/stories

EXHIBIT UNITS

Multimedia

- 1 Interactive map
- 14 videos
- Musical playlists



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