

## AN EVENING WITH CLINT SMITH OPENING KEYNOTE

**JUNE 7 @ 7 PM,  
Temple Israel, Omaha**



**SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR BRIDGE BUILDER SPONSOR**

Building bridges of hope and healing requires an earnest, often uncomfortable encounter with the past. Perhaps no other contemporary writer has demonstrated their ability to probe, digest, and teach this truth more clearly than Clint Smith.

His work reflectively explores the power of narratives and the broader phenomena of public memory — particularly, "how people, communities, and nations should account for the crimes of their past" ("How Germany Remembers the Holocaust," The Atlantic).

## RACE, RELIGION, & SOCIAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE

**JUNE 8 @ 8 AM - 4:30 PM  
Countryside Community Church**

**>>> 8:00 - 8:50 AM REGISTRATION Narthex**

Donuts and Pastries from Pettit's Pastry, Coffee Provided by Common Grounds

**>>> 8:50 - 9:00 AM WELCOME Mary's Hall**

Welcome and introduction to the conference with a land acknowledgement led by Taylor Keen.

**>>> 9:00 - 9:45 AM POETRY READING Mary's Hall**

Author and Keynote Speaker, Clint Smith, will read selections from his latest book, "Above Ground." "Above Ground" is a remarkable poetry collection that traverses the vast emotional terrain of fatherhood, and explores how becoming a parent has recalibrated his sense of the world. It includes poems that interrogate the ways our lives are shaped by both personal lineages and historical institutions.





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10:00 - 10:45 AM

BREAKOUT SESSION ONE

➤➤➤ **American Islamophobia, White Christian Nationalism, and Evangelicals – A Path Forward**

**Tim Orr**

**Location: Mary's Hall**

To understand the Islamophobia driven by white American Evangelicals — namely, the perception of Muslims as a threat to the preservation of America as a Christian nation — we must first endeavor to understand how Christian Nationalism conflates American identity with religious identity.

➤➤➤ **Race, Islam, and Children's Books: the Chronicles of Great Women**

**Amal Alexander**

**Location: Priscilla**

Whether it's building the first university in the world more than 1,100 years ago where Muslims, Jews and Christians studied together side by side; the first queen in Arabia who ruled more than 70 years in Yemen; or the Nigerian warrior queen who united her tribes and ruled for over 30 years —author Amal Alexander aims to bring to light the deeds and actions of many influential women who have fallen into anonymity for much of the world.

➤➤➤ **Navigating Injustice: A Closer Look at Race, Faith, and Mental Health**

**Nabil Tueme**

**Location: Chapel**

This seminar presents findings from Springtide Research Institute's 2022 report, "Navigating Injustice," regarding what young Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) are doing to find peace amid a generational mental health crisis amplified by historical trauma, discrimination, and other race-based forms of exclusion — helping faith leaders to address complex topics like mental health, racial identity, and racial injustice from a sociological perspective.

➤➤➤ **Grassroots Interfaith Diversity**

**Barbara Vennman**

**Location: Rahab**

Discover how a small group of committed individuals began an interfaith Thanksgiving event in Brevard County Florida that grew to a network of hundreds of people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and more than 30 communities of faith working and learning together — a shining example of grassroots interfaith diversity.

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10:00 - 10:45 AM

BREAKOUT SESSION ONE

➤➤➤ **Faith, Culture, and Formation: The Impact of Interfaith Formation  
1st & 2nd Year Students Transitioning into Higher Education on  
HBCU Campuses**

**Kai El-Amin**

**Location: Deborah**

With the rise of secularism, far more students on Historically Black college and university (HBCU) campuses are self-identifying as “none” than in years past. While some religious factors have a positive impact on college success, other religious commitments undermine student success. (Darnell and Sherkat 1997). The aim of this pilot course is to determine if a local, Interfaith Immersion experience will have a positive impact on transitioning in 1st and 2nd year students in Higher Education on HBCU campuses.

➤➤➤ **African and African American Challenge to Slave Religions**

**A'Jamal Byndon**

**Location: Ruth**

Some African languages do not have a name for religion since their beliefs or philosophy are seen as integrated within their worldview. This session outlines the theories and philosophies of the African belief system before the advent of Christianity and Islam’s inception on the continent.

➤➤➤ **The Profound Inclusion of Father Flanagan of Boys Town**

**Thomas Lynch**

**Location: Bathsheba**

The village of Boys Town was one of the first integrated communities in America where children of all races and religions lived together, attended school, played, and worshiped. Denounced by the KKK and other hate groups, visionary founder Father Edward J. Flanagan never wavered from his belief that all men and women were equal and deserved to be treated as such.

➤➤➤ **Brooks Lecture - A Conversation with Rabbi Aryeh Azriel**

**Paul Williams**

**Location: Tamar**

Hear from Rabbi Aryeh Azriel, longtime leader of Temple Israel and one of the founders of Tri-Faith Initiative, as he shares lessons and insights from a lifetime dedicated to community and pioneering interfaith work.

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11:00 - 11:45 AM

BREAKOUT SESSION TWO

➤➤➤ **The Role of Interfaith Collaboration to Heal Our Nation's Divides**

**Rebecca Shrestha and Liz Easton**

**Location: Mary's Hall**

Despite rising polarization, research shows that Americans believe someone with another opinion or belief system dislikes them 2x more than they actually do and 86% of Americans think we can improve our trust in one another (Beyond Conflict, 2020). Share Our America is a new initiative to rebuild our trust in one another through in-person gatherings of diverse groups: shared meals, local activities, and facilitated conversations about differences.

➤➤➤ **Soul Doctors: The Role of Hospital Chaplains in Restoring Faith**

**Nasreen Quadri**

**Location: Rahab**

This case study examined an ACPE-certified CPE residency program that invited participation of Somali Muslim residents to address the chaplaincy representation gap (the vast majority of chaplains come from Christian backgrounds). How might this micromodel for building on community talents be expanded to provide culturally inclusive health care spaces in other local communities?

➤➤➤ **Mi Vida Espiritual: Elevating the Voice of 1.5 and 2nd Generation Latinos in Theological Studies**

**Roger Garcia**

**Location: Deborah**

Despite a realization among religious leadership that the substantially increasing Latino population in America needs to be catered to for religious, spiritual, and ministerial outreach, support, and involvement, very little scholarship exists on the religious affiliation of the 1.5- and 2nd-generation Latino from Gen Z to Gen X. This study showcases modern data on what the religious affiliation trends are of this demographic and elevates their voices as it relates to their own desires for spiritual care, growth, and support.

➤➤➤ **Improving Interfaith Conversations with Evolutionary, Intergroup Psychology**

**Leah Cech and Amanda Irions**

**Location: Ruth**

Traditional promotion of interfaith engagement has often failed to account for how some evolved psychological mechanisms facilitate and inhibit conversations among people with different social identities. This facilitated conversation will present some foundational concepts in intergroup communication and evolutionary psychology and explain how to use these concepts to frame interfaith dialogues for more successful outcomes.

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11:00 - 11:45 AM

BREAKOUT SESSION TWO

➤➤➤ **Motivational Coaching for Muslim Young Adults**

**Hamza Haqqi and Abdullah Najjar**

**Location: Bathsheba**

American Muslim Institute's (AMI's) work has pushed the practice of motivational coaching for young Muslim adolescents via psychological, mental, and spiritual activities. This presentation breaks down the success of these methods to foster holistic development among AMI student participants in preparation for their continued transition into adulthood.

➤➤➤ **The Doctrine of Discovery and Religious Freedom**

**Jeremy Fricke, Tri-Faith Initiative Staff**

**Location: Tamar**

The Papal Bull "Inter Caetera," issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493, stated that any land not inhabited by Christians was available to be "discovered," claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers. This presentation explores how its legacy relates to the Protestant roots of America, Secularism and religious freedom as expressed in the U.S. Constitution, national narratives of Divine Providence, and the Christian Nationalism movements we see today.

➤➤➤ **Countering Islamophobia, Antisemitism, Anti-Black Racism and Other Forms of Bigotry Against Racialized Groups**

**Zachary Markwith**

**Location: Chapel** *Please note, this speaker will be appearing remotely*

The workshop will demonstrate how to host an interethnic/intercultural panel on "Countering Islamophobia, Antisemitism, Anti-Black Racism, and Other Forms of Bigotry Against Racialized Groups." An abbreviated version of Islamic Networks Group's standard panel will be presented, and participants will then be engaged in dialogue and discussion both on the topics tackled by the panel and on the value of these presentations as part of a strategy to counter various forms of racism and bigotry in educational settings.

➤➤➤ **Redlining Policy, Real Estate and Race**

**Terri Crawford**

**Location: Priscilla**

Though redlining was a deliberate disinvestment practice banned by the Fair Housing Act of 1968, decades of disinvestment have contributed to long-lasting effects for residents of formerly redlined communities in North and Northeast Omaha. The project provides a framework for understanding how contemporary racial disparities and the practice of redlining channeled into collaborations with real estate professionals and reshaped the private real estate structure.

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11:45 AM - 1:30 PM

## LUNCH TIME OPTIONS

### FOOD TRUCKS

Mobile Grace: Vegan and Gluten-Free  
Options Available  
Taste of New Orleans: Authentic Cajun &  
Creole Cuisine, Meatless Options Available

### OTHER FOOD OPTIONS NEARBY

Charred Burger + Bar, Summer Kitchen,  
Pacific Eating House, Zen Coffee, Runza, etc

## Open House Tours

Temple Israel

Countryside Community Church

American Muslim Institute (AMI)

It is most appropriate to wear modest, loose-fitting clothes when entering AMI. Men should wear long pants, no shorts, please. Women should wear pants or full-length skirts or dresses, with long sleeves blouses or shirts. Muslim women typically wear a headscarf as well. Non-Muslim women entering the Haram (sanctuary) need to wear a headscarf.

**The Prayer Hall will also be open for afternoon prayers!**

## Other Opportunities

Sponsor and Partner Tables

**Located in the Narthex of CCC**

Tri-Faith Initiative, JCRC, Omaha Public Library, Samuel Bak Museum of Art, Boys Town, Greater Omaha Chamber, Great Plains Black History Museum, Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, Table Grace, Civic Nebraska, City of Omaha Human Rights and Relations Department, Citizens Climate Lobby, We Care for Kids

**Decompression Session 1:00 - 1:25 PM**

**Chapel at CCC**

Decompress from the morning with a soothing session led by Licensed Mental Health Practitioner Tia Manning.



# How the Hope is Passed Panel

Pulling together the conference theme and the title of Smith's book, a panel of local leaders representing traditionally marginalized communities will share "How the Hope is Passed," offering stories of hope and resilience and how those stories are passed inter-generationally.



## Yanira Garcia

Yanira Garcia has lived in Omaha for over 25 years. She was born in Mexico and at age nine, she and her family came to the U.S. in search of a better life. As the first-born, she was the first in her family to graduate high school and the first to go to college. Yanira earned a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and Public Relations and a Bachelor of Arts in Latino Latin American Studies from the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). Recently Yanira also completed her Master of Arts in Integrated Media Communications at the University of Nebraska Lincoln (UNL)

Yanira is a proud wife and mother of two little girls. She is currently working at First National Bank of Omaha (FNBO) in marketing operations. She enjoys giving back to her community by volunteering as a board member for Habitat for Humanity Friends board, as a publications board member for UNO's student-run newspaper, The Gateway, and as an advisory member for her church One Hope in South Omaha.



## Scott Littky

Scott Littky is the Executive Director of the Institute for Holocaust Education located in Omaha, NE. He has been with the Institute for Holocaust Education since the summer of 2018 and is very proud of the work he and his staff are doing.

The Institute for Holocaust Education provides educational resources, workshops, survivor testimony, and integrated arts programming to students, educators, and the public. The IHE provides support to Holocaust survivors in our community. Our goal is to ensure that the tragedy and history of the Holocaust are remembered, that appropriate, fact-based instruction and materials are available to students, educators, and the public to enable them to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and that, as a result, we inspire our community to create a more just and equitable society.



## Peter Szto

Dr. Szto is Professor of Social Work at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work, University of Nebraska at Omaha. Before teaching he worked for 12 years in various inpatient and community mental health settings in Michigan and Philadelphia. His current research focuses on visualizing social welfare with projects in China, Singapore, and also mental health stigma and spirituality. Since 1996, he has taken 120 social work students on travel courses to China. Szto has earned degrees from Calvin University, Michigan State University, Westminster Theological Seminary, and the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Szto was born and raised in New York City to Chinese refugee/immigrant parents. He is happily married.



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# 1:30 - 2:15 PM

# Mary's Hall

## Taylor Keen

Taylor Keen is a full-time instructor in the Heider College of Business Administration in Strategy and Entrepreneurship at Creighton University. Keen holds a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College as well as a Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration from Harvard University, where he served as a Fellow in the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. Taylor is the author of the forthcoming book from Inner Traditions Press "Rediscovering Turtle Island: A First Peoples' Account of the Sacred Geography of America".

A Cherokee Nation citizen, Keen carries the name "Bison Mane" of the Earthen Bison Clan of the Omaha Tribe, The People Who Move Against the Current. Taylor Keen is the Founder of Sacred Seed a NFP to educate and celebrate Indigenous Agricultural Lifeways. Keen serves as a member of the advisory board for the Plains Indian Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, the Joslyn Museum Plains Indian Collection, the Durham Museum, as well as the primary advisor for the Omaha Children's Museum, "A Generation of Hope", an Indigenous Peoples Children's Exhibit.



## Justin Payne

Justin Payne (Music) is a classically-trained tenor, composer, and playwright from Omaha, Nebraska. In addition to collaborating with Dani Cleveland on Heaven Come Home and Little Brown Boy, Justin composed music for The Draft with playwright Lisa Harrison. One of Justin's newest creations is Belle Terre the Musical, a whimsical story that sends an adolescent young woman on a journey to self-discovery with music inspired by the New Orleans brass band style. Justin previously sang as the tenor soloist for Handel's Messiah with the Voices of Omaha, in addition to singing on stages in Germany, Austria, Italy, and China. He holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Nebraska Omaha and a Master of Music from Michigan State University.



## Ferial Pearson

Dr. Pearson is a mother, activist, author, educator, speaker, poet, comedienne, cook, and citizen of the world. As a Kenyan Indian Muslim immigrant queer disabled woman of color, she is passionate about Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Kindness. She has received national and local awards for her work, authored two books, and spoken at TEDx Omaha. Her goal is to make sure you know that you are loved and that you are enough.





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**2:30 - 3:15 PM**

**BREAKOUT SESSION THREE**

**>>> Bibliotherapy for Human Rights, Resiliency and Wellness**

**Sharmila Seyyid**

**Location: Priscilla**

Bibliotherapy is the use of words and literature to promote and support healing, share experiences, communicate information, and develop empathy. Bibliotherapy for human rights draws on the long connection between writers, storytellers, writing and human rights. In this workshop, participants will explore the healing, supportive power of stories for writers, storytellers, story-listeners and readers.

**>>> Bel Canto Duo: Sacred Waters**

**Bel Canto Duo (Darci Griffith Gamerl and David Downing)**

**Location: Sanctuary**

This presentation will incorporate several of Bel Canto Duo's musical works – and several other works – alongside the film "Nebraska Flatwater." The film, which focuses on the beauty of Nebraska, will be followed with a discussion and live performance to close the presentation.

**>>> Reflections on Religious Renewal in Times of Crisis**

**Curtis Hutt**

**Location: Deborah**

Renewalist groups advocating a "return to the past" include religious revivalists, restorationists, and fundamentalists in addition to political movements seeking national re-birth and cultural heritage activists. This presentation asks: How do specific Jewish, Christian, and Islamic renewal groups interact with others and are even birthed in times of crisis?

**>>> Muslims and the American Civil Rights Movement**

**Abdullah Najjar**

**Location: Rahab**

To what extent did Americans Muslims participate and lead in the broader civil rights movement in the '50s and '60s? This presentation takes a closer look at Muslims, racism, the anti-war movement, American capitalism, and the inner cities during a pivotal period in American history.

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2:30 - 3:15 PM

BREAKOUT SESSION THREE

➤➤➤ **Reconnecting to Hope Through Solidarity**

**Dom Chatterjee**

**Location: Chapel**

This workshop will follow a past-present-future trajectory to explore participants' personal relationships to hope, first guiding them toward memories of how they've built solidarity before in a way that cultivated hope for themselves and others — then asking them to reflect on where we are in the present moment.

➤➤➤ **An Atheist and a Christian Walk into a Nonprofit: Reflections from Two Diverse Friends, Colleagues, and DEI Practitioners**

**Shawntal Mallory and Marti Carrington**

**Location: Mary's Hall**

Friends, colleagues and DEI practitioners Marti Carrington and Shawntal Mallory share reflections about how their unique faith journeys as an atheist and a Christian, respectively, brought them together as DEI collaborators and business partners during a period of pandemic and racial unrest in our country.

➤➤➤ **Extending the Table: A Framework for Religious Equity**

**Luke Schulte, Tri-Faith Initiative Staff**

**Location: Ruth**

To encourage community members to cultivate welcoming and belonging for people of diverse religious backgrounds, a new framework is needed to meaningfully address religious equity issues and their origins. It starts by asking a simple, perspective-shifting question: How can we become better hosts to our guests?

➤➤➤ **ACT Now**

**Ralph Kellogg**

**Location: Bathsheba**

Developed during the height of the pandemic to address the mental stress of uncertainty, the ACT (Acknowledgement, Compassionate Accountability and Transparency) model is not only a great tool to help employees manage their own mental health concerns — but also a breakthrough framework for leaders in the workplace to engage in productive, meaningful conversations with employees regarding mental health.

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**3:30 - 4:30 PM**

**Final Group Session**

**What Comes Next?**

**Barry Thomas**

**Location: Mary's Hall**

This group discussion will provide attendees an opportunity to reflect, problem-solve and collaborate. One of the areas of focus will be on action steps after the conference: how can attendees take what they've learned at the conference and put it into action?



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\*as of May 30



**RACE, RELIGION & SOCIAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE**  
**2023 Building Bridges of Hope**



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