Introduction

As ING celebrates its 25th anniversary, our work has become more relevant and crucial than ever, more needed even than during the Gulf War in 1992-1994 and in the aftermath of 9/11/2001.

Since the beginning of the 2016 election cycle, our country has suffered increasing polarization along racial, religious, cultural, and political lines, creating a climate in which hate crimes and other manifestations of bigotry have soared. Americans of all backgrounds and political views now see promoting civil conversation and peace in our increasingly diverse nation as an urgent priority.

ING, founded by Muslim Americans in 1993 to address Islamophobia, has evolved into a peacemaking organization that works through education and interfaith and intercultural engagement to promote mutual understanding and respect among Americans of all religious, racial, and cultural backgrounds.

It is clear that ING’s mission of building interreligious and intercultural understanding is more crucial than ever before, not only for Muslims but for all Americans.

INGYouth speakers presenting before a teen church audience.
Speakers Bureaus

Since 2008, ING has maintained two bureaus: the Islamic Speakers Bureau (ISB), providing individual speakers on topics related to Muslims and Islamic perspectives; and the Interfaith Speakers Bureau (IFSB), providing panels of up to five participants on five major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism) who introduce their faiths and discuss one of a dozen topics relating to religion in the contemporary world.

Audiences for ING presentations and training seminars on Muslims and their faith grew by 30%.

ING’s two Speakers Bureaus have shown significant growth over the past two years, as growing numbers of people seek education that builds understanding among people of diverse backgrounds.

Overall, the number of audience groups receiving ING presentations in AY 2016-2018 increased 5% over the number in the preceding two years, while the audience reached increased by 24%, not counting the number--530,000--reached at the two Women’s Marches, in San Francisco and San Jose, where ING staff were among the keynote speakers.

“Thank you very much for coming to my world religions class. I learned so much in the short 45 minutes you were here. You really opened my eyes to what Islam is really about. I feel we are so heavily influenced by the news that everyone assumes Islam promotes violence. It was great to see firsthand the real teachings of Islam.”

- High school student, Hayward
**IFSB panels: Dramatic growth**

The demand and audience for ING’s interfaith panels grew even more than the growth of ING’s presentations overall. The number of classes and other audience groups reached by IFSB panels grew by 72% between 2014-2016 and 2016-2018, from 115 to 198; the total audience for IFSB panels grew 118% over the same period, from 1,654 to 3,599. All this indicates a considerable growth in interest in interfaith dialogue and understanding that likely also is related to the increased visibility of various forms of racism and bigotry over the past two years. After an IFSB panel in a San Francisco high school, a teacher summed up what seems to be a widespread sentiment: “I believe that if everyone would participate in a panel like this, there would be less violence in the world.”

“Your ING speaker did a great job connecting with the students - he recognized early on what they knew/didn’t know - and jumped to where he needed in the presentation. This thinking on his feet made it possible to adapt the presentation for the audience.”

- Middle school teacher

“"The ING speakers are generally great, the material covered is excellent and having that personal connection makes a big difference in combating stereotypes and Islamophobia."”

- High school teacher

![IFSB Audience Groups, 2014-2018: 72% increase](image)

![IFSB Audience, 2014-2018: 118% increase](image)

ING Interfaith Speakers Bureau panel at a school assembly.
Audience diversity

Worthy of note, and also almost certainly related to the political climate, is the increasing diversity of the audiences of ING presentations. While in 2012-2014 over half—52%—of ING’s presentation venues were K-12 schools, in 2016-2018 that figure had dropped to 34%, while the share of presentations to adult audiences in community, faith-based, and other venues grew from 58% to 66%.

Given the overall growth in the number of presentations, this did not happen at the expense of school presentations, which, as noted above, grew significantly over this period.

“Excellent presentation. The ING speaker presented herself with wisdom and grace as well as deep spirituality.”

- Congregational leader

ING Interfaith Speakers Bureau panel at a church.
ING grows affiliate support by providing monthly trainings

Since 2000, ING has built a nationwide network with 19 affiliate Islamic Speakers Bureaus in 17 states and one Canadian province. These affiliates use ING’s presentations and approach to educate about Muslims and Islam in their regions. This past year, ING helped to organize new affiliates in Florida and West Virginia while continuing to support its existing affiliates through a variety of training and classes.

“Every aspect of the presentation was outstanding, the content, the presenters, the engagement of the speakers. The ING speakers were exceptional.”

~ Healthcare administrator

IFS Speakers engaged in Buddhist-Muslim dialogue.
IMPACT: Improving Perceptions

ING’s effectiveness cannot, of course, be measured by audience numbers alone. What matters above all is the impact of our presentations in dispelling prejudice against Muslims and other diverse groups.

To gauge this impact, ING conducts surveys of attitudes toward Muslims and Islam before and after school presentations of Getting to Know American Muslims and Their Faith, ING’s introductory presentation on Muslims and Islam. The results clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of our work in promoting positive views of Muslims and dispelling prejudice.

For instance, surveys conducted over the past two years show that, after an ISB presentation,

- the percentage of students believing that Islam promotes terrorism falls by **62.5%**
- while the percentage of those believing that the religion promotes violence drops by **75%**
- The percentage of those seeing American Muslims as “foreigners who don’t speak English” falls by almost **50%**
- while the percentage of those understanding that Muslims “have long been a part of the history of this country” increases by almost **30%**
- The percentage of those seeing American Muslims as “high level professionals” increases by **100%**
- while the percentage of those seeing American Muslims as “taxi cab drivers” falls by **33%**

The audience views of Muslim attitudes toward women—one of the most widely stereotyped aspects of Islam—likewise show marked change.

- The percentage of those believing that Islam promotes the oppression of women and the percentage of those believing that Muslims “view women as inferior” both drop by almost **65%**

ING gauges the impact of its Interfaith Speakers Bureau (IFSB) presentations through questions on an evaluation form that invite open-ended answers on the impact of an interfaith panel on attitudes toward religions and religious people.

Among the most frequent responses are comments to the effect that the experience of the panel has changed attitudes toward particular religions and their adherents—primarily Muslims, but also Jews and Buddhists—for the better, that respondents now understand these faiths and see the many commonalities between them and their own religion.
To meet increasing demands, ING adds new Interfaith panel topics

With the new urgency of building understanding between adherents of different faiths, ING has developed new topics for its IFSB panels. These include:

- **Women and Religion**, on the impact both positive and negative of religion on women and the role that women have played and do play in that area.

- **Peacemaking and Religion**, on the traditions of peacemaking in doctrine and action found in different religions.

- **Religion—What Is It Good For?** responding to contemporary critiques of religion as obsolete, oppressive, and opposed to science.

- **Religious Holidays**, on the celebrations and holy days of the world’s major religions and their meaning for those who observe them.

- **The Abrahamic Faiths**, on the commonalities and differences among the three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, that trace their ancestry to the figure of Abraham.

ING has also revised the format of IFSB panels to make them more lively and interactive and added a call to action to conclude each panel, moving audiences to take what they have learned and experienced into their communities to promote mutual understanding and respect.

Interest in ING’s online curriculum and lesson plans grew by 360%

ING’s efforts in education are not limited to face-to-face presentations. We have produced curricula based on our ISB presentations and IFSB panels available free of charge to educators for use in classrooms. These curricula include the complete slide show and script of the corresponding presentation or panel, supplemented by content and discussion questions, suggested classroom activities, links to appropriate videos, and resource lists. These have been downloaded by 430 educators in 43 states and three Canadian provinces. Interest in these materials has soared since 2016; the number of educators downloading ING’s online curriculum grew 360%, from 55 in AY 2014-2016 to 253 in AY 2016-2018. This is doubtless related to the current political climate discussed above.
ING makes new content available online, downloaded by 440 people in 40 states in the first 6 months

We have also put up on our website a number of presentations with scripts freely available to the public, including a version of the introductory presentation Getting to Know American Muslims and Their Faith and presentations on Islamophobia, ISIS, and Ramadan. Since February of this year, 349 people—more than one per day—from 39 states and from every continent have downloaded these materials.
INGYouth

ING certifies teen speakers in 8 states, who delivered 40 presentations in their schools to 6,000 people

Over the past two years, ING has looked to several avenues, apart from its continuing expansion of ISB and IFSB presentations and panels, to build its reach and impact.

Starting in late 2014, ING has been building up INGYouth, a program of workshops that equip young American Muslims with the Islamic literacy, speaking skills, and self-confidence to speak effectively with their peers about their faith, answer challenging questions, and push back against bullying and harassment. INGYouth has thus far held 23 workshops (of which 13 took place in AY 2016-2018) in ten states: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and West Virginia. Youth who successfully complete an INGYouth speaker training program are certified as teen speakers, and ING notifies their school that they have the requisite skills and knowledge to do classroom presentations.

“I got to learn a little more about some of the religions that I knew nothing about and how similar they are to my religion.”

- High school student

Over the past two years, 89 youth in eight states have been certified and have delivered at least 40 presentations to a total audience of around 6,000.

INGYouth speakers presenting to fellow students.
TRADITIONAL MEDIA

ING media outreach generates 450 articles, reaching millions of people

In the biennium just past, ING worked to expand its reach in traditional print and broadcast media, garnering 457 media hits that reached tens of millions of Americans, including coverage in National Public Radio, the New York Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, and NBC News. These have included both articles and programs partly or wholly about ING and its work and articles by ING staff and speakers on various topics. Among the headlines are

- Supreme Court Decision on Travel Ban Promotes Bigotry  
  *(San Francisco Chronicle, 6/26/18)*

- More Than a Headscarf: Forum takes aim at misconceptions about Muslims  
  *(Detroit Free Press, 4/29/18)*

- Turning Rampant Anti-Muslim Bullying into Teachable Moments  
  *(National Public Radio, 4/16/18)*

- Trump’s Anti-Muslim Tweets Exemplify Schoolyard Bullying  
  *(USA Today, 12/1/17)*

This effort is a return to ING’s roots, since the organization initially focused on engaging with media to promote more accurate coverage of Muslims and Islam. Now ING has a quarter century of experience and accomplishment to draw media attention.

SOCIAL MEDIA

ING social media reach and web traffic increase dramatically

ING has continued to expand its social media outreach. Over the past two years, our Facebook “likes” more than doubled, from 16,967 to 42,213. We have 7,170 followers on Twitter, which we use to share the most inspiring stories of the day alongside our own content. Our YouTube channel, which hosts event footage, interviews, curriculum highlights, and video reports, has had around 42,000 views in the six years of its existence and garnered just under 12,000 views in the past two years. In addition, ING recently opened an Instagram account to make use of what is now the most popular social media site among young people.
SOCIAL MEDIA (continued)

In the past two years, over 469,000 users viewed our website content or interacted with our online educational materials. This represents a remarkable 40% increase in traffic from the previous two-year period. The FAQs alone had over 232,000 page views over the two years, a 55% increase from 150,000 in the preceding biennium. Our Calendar of Important Islamic Dates received over 46,000 page views. We have also used over $190,000 of Google Grant money to distribute our content through targeted ads.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR

Social media campaigns promoting inclusion reach 5 million Americans

We have also dramatically built up our Know Your Neighbor Multifaith Encounters program. The network of participating national, regional, and local faith-based, interfaith, and civil rights organizations has grown to over 100, and the six social media campaigns that have been held starting in June, 2017, have had a combined reach of over five million, with 10 million impressions. The topics of these campaigns, all focused on sharing experiences and resources for bringing diverse Americans together for mutual learning and encounter, included:

- **Share Your Story** (sharing what people would like others to know about them and their community)
- **Back to School** (resources and experiences for making schools more inclusive)
- **New Year’s Resolutions** (for actions to be taken to promote pluralism and inclusion)
- **Be an Upstander** (on standing up for one another in a climate of division)
- **Share Your American Story** (sharing immigrant and multicultural experiences)
- **Creating Inclusive Classrooms**
NEXT 25 YEARS

Expanding our reach as a peace-building organization

As the past two years have dramatically demonstrated, the struggle for understanding and harmony across racial, ethnic, religious, and other lines is far from over. ING expects to be pursuing its mission for another 25 years and beyond. Where are we going in the next quarter century? Our plans must match the magnitude of the issues we confront. ING has become the voice of not only of Muslims but also of other diverse groups at the grassroots level in many towns and cities and thus has made itself known as a peace-making organization that is dedicated to helping people know their neighbors through education, interfaith engagement, and joint action.

Among the new initiatives that we are planning as we move forward are:

1. Launch of a new speakers bureau that explores the interconnectedness of bigotry across racialized communities, and how to combat it together.

2. INGyouth teens working with Jewish and Sikh youth to prevent bullying and raise awareness of cultural diversity on school campuses.

3. Institutional impact in lower income Bay Area regions that supports African American and immigrant youth as well as parents of Middle Eastern and South Asian backgrounds.

4. New artistic performances of Halaqa Seder programs that explore Muslim, Jewish, and Christian perspectives of shared prophetic traditions.

5. Release of updated presentations and answers to questions about Islam and Muslims.

The times demand no less of our organization, and our record of past success gives us confidence for the future.

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