

# The Nexus: Global Youth Summit

on Innovative **Philanthropy** and Social **Entrepreneurship**

July 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 EVENT REPORT

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your interest in helping to develop the Nexus: Global Youth Summit and the larger movement that it represents. We are grateful for the guidance and support that we receive from allies like you.

For more than a decade I have crossed the globe in search of new ideas and new leaders, along the way building networks of young social entrepreneurs and philanthropists. After co-founding several organizations and helping to create new grant-making foundations, I sought partnership with the United Nations and federal governments to give visibility to a new, revolutionary idea. *If women's issues were able to unite women, inspire new generosity, and galvanize new philanthropic leadership among women, then could youth issues unite young people and galvanize a movement of young global philanthropy?* I think so. And, as the Director of Search for Common Ground –USA, I believe we have demonstrated **HOW** through the Nexus: Global Youth Summit.

In the photo below, at the opening reception of the Summit, I stood before several hundred of the world's most influential young people. I spoke of a roadmap to the future and invited the community to unite and launch a process of global transformation. And, we did. And, below is a report about it. Please help us make the most of this extraordinary event and its far reaching impact. Please join us.

Sincerely,



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What was it?

Who came?

What was the impact?

What's next? & Comments from a few participants



## What was it?

From July 26<sup>th</sup> to July 29<sup>th</sup> of 2011, more than 350 young philanthropists, wealth-holders, and social entrepreneurs gathered in New York City, both at the United Nations and in other venues around Manhattan, for the Nexus: Global Youth Summit on Innovative Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship. The event was convened by Search for Common Ground with support from many volunteers and partnering organizations, including the United Nations.



The goals of the event were to:

- 1) Explore and advance the potential of next generation leadership across nations and sectors;
- 2) Catalyze young global philanthropy and social investment; and
- 3) Bridge communities of wealth and social entrepreneurship through dialogue, collaborative problem-solving and education.

The experience was well received. The process inspired many new partnerships and catalyzed millions of dollars in new giving. It also launched a new *Global Campaign for a Culture of Philanthropy* that aims to pass a UN resolution calling for global philanthropic reforms, campaigns to promote greater generosity, and structured donor education programs, that among other things will raise the profile of positive role models in communities of wealth.

Perhaps most compelling, however, is the influence the event had on inspiring new leadership. Dozens of participants came forward and offered to organize communities of young wealth in their cities and countries on behalf of the Nexus.

In short, the Nexus: Global Youth Summit has sparked a global movement for greater philanthropy education.

## Who came?

There were participants from more than 50 countries and they represented families with a combined net worth of more than \$100 billion. Participants, speakers, advisors, and hosts included members of the Saudi royal family, the Swaziland royal family, the Villela and Johannpeter Gerdau families from Brazil, the



Rovzar and Coppel families from Mexico, the Bogachev family from Russia and many more from around the world. There were many well known American names as well including members of the following families: Johnson, Rockefeller, Bronfman, Kluge, Roosevelt, Pew, Thompson, Hilton, Meredith, etc. Peppered within the group were also a number of young self-made philanthropists, mostly of .com success. And finally, there were many leading young social entrepreneurs.

The ratio of wealth-holders to non-wealthy was about 2 to 1.

## What was the impact?

We evaluated the impact of the event in several ways, including through testimonials (video and written), surveys, interviews, and media.

After the event, we surveyed participants through an online questionnaire and personal emails. More than 95% of respondents praised the event as “offering the opportunity to meet inspiring people and expand networks of peers,” and nearly 75% reported that the event helped them “change the way [they see themselves] in reference to the problems facing the larger world.”

Nearly everyone expressed an interest in staying involved and collaborating with the rest of the network. Many reported new partnerships that they had developed as a result of connections made at the event. With few exceptions the keynote speakers, panels, and panelists received positive reviews. Areas of criticism were minor and centered on simple operational challenges such as getting name tags and finding registration.

During and after the conference, members of the Nexus team interviewed participants, both to understand their experience at the event and to discuss the future of the Nexus community. One of the most important consequences of the event was the sense of belonging that it created. Many realized that they were not alone in their efforts to convince their families to be more philanthropic. This realization and discovery was significant for many and helped create a stage for collective organizing and action. Some examples are provided below.

In addition to a desire to “be part of something,” many participants came seeking support and advice about how to bring the culture of philanthropy into their families. And, they left with new answers, resources and relationships. A number have confided in us, explaining that the conference was their very first step into the arena of non-profits and charitable giving, and that now, post event, they have become “facilitators” within their families, bringing siblings and cousins to fundraising events and more.

These results inspired us, yet an even larger number of participants



have shared that the event was a catalyst for them. In addition to engaging their families, they have given themselves a greater challenge and volunteered to mobilize the wider constituency of young wealth in their cities and regions. Dozens of members of the network have offered to host follow up conferences in diverse regions around the world ranging from the US and South America, to Africa, Asia, and Europe. At this moment, in September of 2011, outside the United States, the teams of Nexus alumni are coming together to organize events in Pakistan, Mexico, China, Brazil, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Russia, India, the UK, and more.

In addition to inspiring new philanthropic leadership, the event also inspired a lot of philanthropy. Several million dollars in new charitable gifts have been reported to us as a result of relationships that were created at the Nexus.

In addition to elevating generosity and inspiring new leadership, participants reported that the event helped “raise the bar for philanthropic dialog and deliberation.” One self described “philanthropy



innovator” wrote, “It is so refreshing to see a room of people who get the difference between change and charity. I hope the Nexus can bring its magic potion to the wider, more mainstream, more grey-haired donor community.”

The idea and hope that the Nexus event, and the team behind it, could transform philanthropy, as a sector, was expressed by others as well, including journalists. The media footprint of the event was good. Four

mainstream publications wrote articles about it, including the Huffington Post, Forbes, Vanity Fair, and Registered Rep. All articles were congratulatory and several spoke to the unprecedented nature of the event and the movement behind it. Forbes compared the group to the Gates-Buffett Giving Pledge, suggesting that we too could substantially increase billionaire generosity by mobilizing next generation family members around philanthropy. The young Forbes journalist, Brian Solomon, reported that according to the Summit organizers, “what limits young wealthy people from actively giving back is an ‘inspiration gap.’ In other words, they have the money and the potential influence to start making a difference, but not the motivation or knowledge.” The summit created healthy spaces to boost motivation and increase knowledge. The Vanity Fair journalist, Jamie Johnson, described the event as evidence that the culture of giving and volunteering was “catching on,” and that the summit lived up to its stated mandate to create “a community of strong, capable, young change-makers.” (Forbes article: <http://onforb.es/mV1nWC> ; Vanity Fair article: <http://vnty.fr/ohojif> ).

Finally, the conference program itself was well praised. One supporter wrote, “Your event was diverse and had something for everyone, while featuring some of the world’s biggest names, like the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon! Wow! Count me in for the next Summit!”

As a platform dedicated to young donor education, the agenda offered panels on various subjects including eco-investing, drug policy reform, fame for social change, democratizing philanthropy, local to global collaboration, intra-family dialog, impact investing, organizing Hollywood, and much more. The agenda also included group dinners and lounge parties in the evenings.

It was the first summit of its kind at the United Nations, and likely the first of many. The unprecedented nature of it was a political victory for young people, themselves, who seldom get the limelight, especially at the UN where national agendas and global issues are ever present.

## What's next?

Many new projects came out of the summit. On the third day there were several “rapid collaboration pitch” sessions that launched new ideas with Summit participants coming on board as partners. They included the idea of forming an international giving circle, a platform for sharing “best ideas,” and an initiative to persuade governments and large donor agencies to look beyond pure economics and incorporate social and psychological metrics more and more as measures of national progress.

While these projects are still developing and autonomously managed by the network membership, the core Nexus team is currently focused on forming its governing board. In addition, the Nexus team is working on the following initiatives:

- 1) Global Campaign for a Culture of Philanthropy: Just as the UN campaign for the Millennium Development Goals has helped nation states set priorities and track progress on issues of social development, we believe that the UN and its member countries can also cultivate greater philanthropic development as well. We are pushing for the idea of a UN resolution calling for a Culture of Philanthropy and a campaign to support it. We promote several themes through the campaign ranging from the issue of tax incentives for philanthropy and the need for positive role models in wealth, to raising awareness about the value of generosity and the innovation that young people bring to it. More details are provided here: <http://bit.ly/pBuhNO>
- 2) Nexus 2012 and Movement: The next major global summit will take place in New York City in September of 2012. Before that time, many other events will take place at national and regional levels building from the Nexus alumni network and deepening the ideas of it. The core Nexus team is carefully crafting the DNA of the organization and sharing it with those Nexus alumni that take initiative and organize at local and regional levels. As a trend, through its events, the Nexus aims to improve the philanthropic industry by building quality bridges between communities of wealth and communities of social entrepreneurship. Whereas past donor education efforts may have prioritized scholarship,



analysis by experts, prestige and institutional credibility, the Nexus emphasizes the value of a hands-on approach, experiential learning, and building meaningful relationships for meaningful dialog, both between grantees and grant-makers as well as across social, cultural, political, and national boundaries. More information about these events is available at [www.youngdonor.org](http://www.youngdonor.org)

- 3) **Traveling Seminars:** To help advance young donor education at grassroots levels we will develop a program to bring cohorts of young wealth-holders and social entrepreneurs on bus trips with each other through different regions of the United States and eventually through different countries. The goals will be to 1) expose young potential investors to organizations that are led by youth (their peers in age), and to 2) learn, as a group, about non-profits, philanthropy, and social change. We find that young wealth-holders get inspired and engaged by their peers who are “doing good” for the world. Inspiration leads to generosity and experiential learning leads to wise giving. More information about this project is available upon request.
- 4) **Other Projects:** The Nexus team is cultivating other ideas and projects, as well, including: managing a private Facebook group for conference participants, producing a film about young wealth and philanthropy, hosting a series of small retreats to cultivate new partnerships, forming a collaborative investment fund that will focus on youth, organizing a network of young-philanthropy support organizations and hosting events to present them to young wealth-holders, and launching a for-profit initiative that will consult banks about how to work with next-generation wealth-holders.



## Comments from a few participants

Below are some testimonials that were recently emailed to the Nexus team by some participants:

"You did a fantastic job of organizing the event - thanks to your hard work, it was a huge success!" –A former Director of a Major UN Agency

"A big congratulations on the summit. I attended the first full day (at the UN) and was really blown away. An incredible energy in the room, inspiring individuals and a lot to think about after those panel discussions." –Member of top New York real-estate family

"Excellent work with the summit. I'm very eager to stay involved." –A nationally recognized young philanthropy leader

"I was honored to be part of such a life-changing event." –A 20-year-old member of a top Asian family

"Congratulations on a wonderful summit. I met some great people and heard some inspiring things. I am looking forward to the next summit and wish you a very restful weekend after all your hard work. It paid off, rather, it will pay itself forward!!" -A major Arab Royal family member

"Hey Nexus Team - Wanted to say you guys put together a really amazing event - Congrats." –A major organizer of Hollywood celebrities

"Thanks for making my year. The conference was great this week, and I look to what we can do together as a generation now. Thanks for the opportunity to allow me to attend!" –A nationally recognized music industry leader



"Thanks for putting on such a wonderful event. It led to a couple of new ideas and potential collaborative projects for me. I'll look forward to the next one." –A European self-made philanthropist and entrepreneur

"Many congratulations for The Nexus. It was an inspiring and humbling experience, even for an old guy like me..." -An Elder and mentor of many leading philanthropists

"Congratulations to the Nexus team for an extraordinary accomplishment." –A national non-profit leader

"Thanks for the opportunity! The panel went amazingly well and I got great feedback!" –A leading young TV producer

For more information contact Jonah Wittkamper at [jwittkamper@sfcg.org](mailto:jwittkamper@sfcg.org) or +1 202 777 2208

Finally, we are grateful to our sponsors for helping to make this inaugural event possible:

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