

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the members of our organization, I would like to thank you all for coming here to share with us this special night. I know all of you cannot wait to see the Whirling Dervishes; so, I won't take up too much of your time. I would like to give you some background information on our organization, the Foundation for Inter-Cultural Dialogue, also known as FID.

FID was established in September 2004, by a group of Arizonans, mostly of Turkish background, in hopes of promoting mutual respect and dialogue among the members of our community who come from different cultural and/or religious backgrounds. Drawing our inspiration from Mr. Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish Islamic Scholar, we feel that such dialogue is only possible through educating each other and coming together under various circumstances.

As members of FID:

- We do not aim to teach people how to interact; instead, our goal is to provide the members of our community with opportunities to engage in inter-cultural dialogue;
- We do not intend to unify all cultures; instead we want everybody to appreciate the cultural differences and enjoy this learning process; and
- We do not aim to unify all religions, nor are we trying to promote any particular religion; instead, we want everybody to appreciate the religious differences and accept each other as they are.

In other words, our aim is to provide people with a new platform for friendship; one that dispels intolerance and prejudice originated from absence of communication. To serve this purpose, FID is dedicated to organize seminars, panels, dinners, art exhibits, and music and dance performances.

Our first event was an Interfaith Dinner in November 2004 at the Sheraton Airport Hotel, where we invited members of different cultures and religions to share one of the nights of Holy month of Ramadan. Our second event was a panel on the "Necessity of Inter-Cultural Dialogue" at the Memorial Union at Arizona State University. Representatives of different cultural and religious groups joined us to share their views on the inter-cultural dialogue.

We have also joined together with the local cultural and religious groups and interfaith organizations to assess what we can do altogether for the benefit of our society.

By organizing events similar to the Whirling Dervishes of Rumi, we would like Arizonans to see samples of different cultures. Tonight, you will see a sample of Sufi tradition on stage. We chose to bring this one-of-a-kind ritual ceremony because Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi is a symbol figure for love, tolerance and dialogue.

We are motivated by Rumi's well known message and call for love, humanity and peace:

Come, come, whoever you are...
Come and come yet again...
Come even if you have broken your vows a thousand times
Wanderer, idolater, worshipper of fire...
Ours is not a caravan of despair,
This is the date of hope,
Come, come yet again, come!