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## **The Amish Heritage Foundation Invites You to Their Inaugural Annual Conference in Lancaster, PA**

*First of Its Kind in 300+ Years of Amish History*

FORT WORTH, TX, August 29, 2018 – Set in the oldest Amish community in the US, “[Disrupting History: Reclaiming Our Amish Story](#)” takes place in Lancaster, PA at Franklin & Marshall College on Sept. 28-29 (Fri + Sat). No Amish escapee has produced an academic event about the Amish and no academic conferences about the Amish have accurately represented or included their voice. The line-up of speakers represents five out of eight Ivy League schools, plus a panel of minority women entrepreneurs including Amish, Mennonite, Navajo, Jewish, and Muslim.

Friday’s keynote is by Pulitzer-nominated Professor of Law Marci Hamilton (University of Pennsylvania; Founder, CEO and Academic Director of CHILD USA) and Saturday’s keynote is by author and member of the Council on Foreign Relations Galen Guengerich, MDiv, PhD (Senior Minister at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, New York City).

Plenary speakers are Professor of Anthropology Michael Billig (Franklin & Marshall College), Sarah Haider (Co-Founder and Executive Director of Ex-Muslims of North America), Mary Byler (Sexual Assault Survivor and Plaintiff in landmark Amish case), Joel Engelman (PhD Candidate, Clinical Psychology Program, Bowling Green State University; raised Ultra-Orthodox Jewish), Brian Young (Navajo Writer + Filmmaker; MFA Writing for Fiction candidate, Columbia University), Barbra Graber (Founder, The Mennonite Abuse Prevention List; Former Director and Professor, Eastern Mennonite University’s theater program), Elam Zook (Board Member of AHF), and Torah Bontrager (Founder and Executive Director of AHF).

The panel of women entrepreneurs includes Kim Gleason (Executive Director of Two Worlds; Co-Founder of Native Women’s Business Summit; Navajo Nation member), Lizzy Hershberger (Amish escapee and forthcoming memoir author), Cheryl Sherwin (HR Director; raised Mennonite), and Tazeen Hasan (Journalism candidate, Harvard; Freelance Journalist; Human Rights Activist; conservative Muslim). Possible additional guest participants include Malkie Schwartz (Founder of Footsteps, created to help Ultra Orthodox Jewish members transition to the outside) and Freiman Stoltzfus (Amish-Mennonite artist).

Friday evening will conclude with an uplifting live music performance by R&B singer-songwriter Tanisha Avent from NYC, at Tellus360’s second floor lounge. The performance is open to the public and local community.

The conference will conclude with a closing reception hosted by Amish-Mennonite artist Freiman Stoltzfus at the Freiman Stoltzfus Gallery in downtown Lancaster.

The start-up nonprofit itself is a first in Amish history. No other nonsectarian institution exists that advocates for people inside and outside the [Amish Church](#) and makes the transition smoother for those who've escaped or wish to leave.

"When I was around 13 years old, I told myself that if I 'made it' after my escape, I'd help the ones left behind," Founder and Columbia University alumna Torah Bontrager said. "This Foundation is the manifestation of that childhood vow, and I'm deeply grateful for all the incredibly accomplished speakers who've generously gifted their time to support this cause. This is truly an 'impossible' dream come true, one that will correct the course of history for future generations of Amish children."

"When outsiders tell the Amish story, the ownership of destiny is surrendered," Board Member Elam Zook said. "The 1972 Supreme Court case, *WI vs. Yoder*, created an embrace of ignorance and a poverty of literature among our people. In the process, it ran roughshod over our legal rights as children and subsequent adults and handed our Amish identity to the non-Amish. It's time to take back our story. Our future and survival depend on it."

Friday's keynote "What About Children's Rights? Overturning *WI vs. Yoder*" is by Professor of Law Marci Hamilton, the Robert A. Fox Leadership Program Professor of Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. In her Pulitzer-nominated book *God vs. the Gavel: The Perils of Extreme Religious Liberty*, she writes extensively about *Yoder* and emphasizes that anyone who harms another person should be governed by the laws that govern everyone else.

Saturday's keynote "A Revised Understanding of God, Belonging, and Freedom" is by Galen Guengerich, MDiv, PhD, Senior Minister at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in New York City and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. In his book *God Revised: How Religion Must Evolve in a Scientific Age*, he emphasizes that we need a way of being religious that doesn't insult our intelligence but unites us in community, grounds our morality, and engages us with a world that still holds more mystery than answers.

Early Bird tickets are on sale through August 30. Also available are a limited number of complimentary tickets sponsored by donors for sexual assault survivors and Amish escapees. AHF is looking for sponsors, volunteers, and members of the press to help make the event a success.

To learn more about AHF and the conference schedule, please visit [www.AmishHeritage.org/events](http://www.AmishHeritage.org/events) or [DisruptingHistory.eventbrite.com](http://DisruptingHistory.eventbrite.com).

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**ABOUT The Amish Heritage Foundation:**

The Amish Heritage Foundation's mission is to establish a new generation of Amish leaders who reclaim their Amish story, engage their silenced issues, and transition into active members of the global community, guided by enlightenment principles.

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