

2019

COLLEGE
FREEDOM
FORUM
IN BOSTON

AFTER ACTION REPORT

Human Rights Foundation
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www.hrf.org

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EVENT OVERVIEW



On February 20, 2019, the Human Rights Foundation (HRF) partnered with Harvard University's International Relations Council (IRC) to host the first College Freedom Forum in Boston. This event marked the first time that College Freedom Forum (CFF) programming returned to the city since the first CFF in 2013, and HRF welcomed a fusion of new and old partners to further evolve the programming and engage student attendees in new ways.

Over 300 attendees gathered in Harvard's Science Center to hear from an outstanding array of human rights advocates and dissidents: psychology expert Steven Pinker, gender rights activist Leyla Hussein, Chinese democracy advocate Ti-Anna Wang, Syrian citizen journalist Abdalaziz Alhamza, Turkish dissident Enes Kanter, and Venezuelan pro-democracy activist and violinist Wuilly Arteaga.

ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION

The Human Rights Foundation is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that promotes and protects human rights globally, with a focus on closed societies. HRF unites people in the common cause of defending human rights and promoting liberal democracy.

Our mission is to ensure that freedom is both preserved and promoted around the world. HRF creates sustainable campaigns, such as Flash Drives for Freedom, and transformative conferences, such as our Oslo Freedom Forum series and CFF.

ABOUT THE COLLEGE FREEDOM FORUM

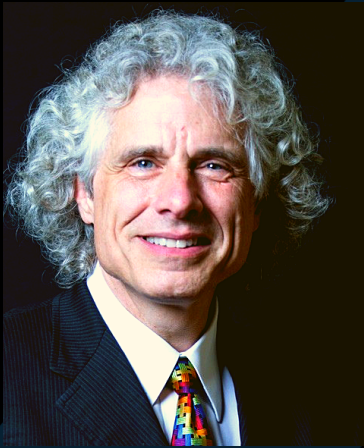
The College Freedom Forum (CFF) is a series of one-day events produced by the Human Rights Foundation (HRF) and designed to educate and enlighten students about individual rights and democracy around the world. The program brings together diverse pro-democracy activists from dictatorial countries, to share their stories and spark new ideas for advancing freedom.

HRF piloted the CFF program in 2013 at Tufts University and, as of Feb. 2019, has since held 11 events at campuses such as Stanford, Arizona State, and the Universidad Francisco Marroquín (Guatemala).

Each CFF features three to six short, inspiring talks by speakers in the HRF community. The talks are followed by a question-and-answer session, with additional time for students to approach speakers for one-on-one conversations about the role they can play in making the world more peaceful, prosperous, and free.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES AND TALK SUMMARIES

STEVEN PINKER, USA, NONVIOLENCE



Steven Pinker is a professor of psychology at Harvard University and one of the world's leading authorities on language and the mind. Initially focusing his work on experimental psychology and language acquisition in children, Pinker eventually turned his attention to language and politics, the neural basis of consciousness, and the decline in violence worldwide over the past several decades.

Pinker provided opening remarks at CFF Boston, starting a discussion of the state of human rights today on a global level and highlighting the importance of nonviolent activism.

LEYLA HUSSEIN, SOMALIA, GENDER RIGHTS



Leyla Hussein is a psychotherapist specializing in supporting survivors of sexual abuse. She is an international lecturer on female genital mutilation (FGM) and gender rights. She is the founder of The Dahlia Project, the UK's first specialist therapeutic service for FGM survivors, and the co-founder of the anti-FGM charity, Daughters of Eve.

Hussein emceed the CFF Boston event and gave a short talk about the importance of fighting for gender rights, especially as it regards to ending the practice of female genital mutilation.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES AND TALK SUMMARIES



ENES KANTER, TURKEY, RULE OF LAW

Enes Kanter is an outspoken critic of Turkey's authoritarian regime and a professional NBA basketball player for the Oregon Trailblazers. Because of his criticism of President Erdogan and support of the Gulen movement, Kanter has become a target of the Turkish government and has been publicly disowned by his family.

Kanter videoed into the conference to discuss his criticism of the Erdogan regime and the dangers that he's had to face as a dissident.



ABDALAZIZ ALHAMZA, SYRIA, NONVIOLENCE

Abdalaziz Alhamza is the co-founder and spokesperson for Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently (RBSS), a group of activists who use citizen journalism to expose the terror tactics of ISIS in Syria. The group uses social media and smuggled photos and videos to show life under ISIS, and has served as a major source for news organizations around the world.

Alhamza discussed his work with RBSS, the growth of the organization, and the death of one of his fellow activists. He also addressed the need for digital literacy and encryption within the activist community.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES AND TALK SUMMARIES



TI-ANNA WANG, CHINA, DEMOCRACY

Ti-Anna Wang is a Chinese human rights advocate, named to commemorate the victims of the Tiananmen Square massacre. In 2002, her father—leading democracy activist Wang Bingzhang—was arrested for his vocal opposition to communism. Since her father’s arrest and conviction, Wang has launched an international campaign for his release.

Wang's talk focused on her father's story and her lifelong struggle to free China's political prisoners and advocate for Chinese democracy.



WULLY ARTEAGA, VENEZUELA, NONVIOLENCE

Wully Arteaga is a Venezuelan violinist and pro-democracy activist who has become an unexpected symbol of the country’s democratic opposition. Since anti-government demonstrations erupted last April, Arteaga, dressed in the colors of his country and armed only with his musical instrument, has played the violin at the front lines of the protests amidst riot police, armed vehicles, and tear gas.

Arteaga addressed the recent crisis in Venezuela and performed a short selection on his violin for the audience.

EVENT PROMOTION

Leading up to the event, HRF's communication team employed a robust social media strategy to maximize pre-event exposure to Boston students.

After an initial announcement of the event and its speakers in the HRF newsletter and across all social media platforms, the communications team adopted a two-pronged approach: Twitter (reaching out to HRF's **163K followers**) and Facebook (directly targeting audiences in the Boston area). The team also re-introduced each speaker in a "teaser trailer" posted on both platforms.



*Our speakers' teaser trailers reached over **11,000** Facebook users, and were viewed over **23,000** times in total.*

*The announcement of CFF Boston was one of the best-performing tweets in HRF history, with over **190 retweets** and **185 likes**.*



54 *attendees reported hearing about the conference from HRF's social media or on-campus promotional materials.*

ATTENDEE PROFILE

Total Number of Pre-Registered Attendees: **144**

Total Number of Event Attendees: **276**

Most students came from the following universities:

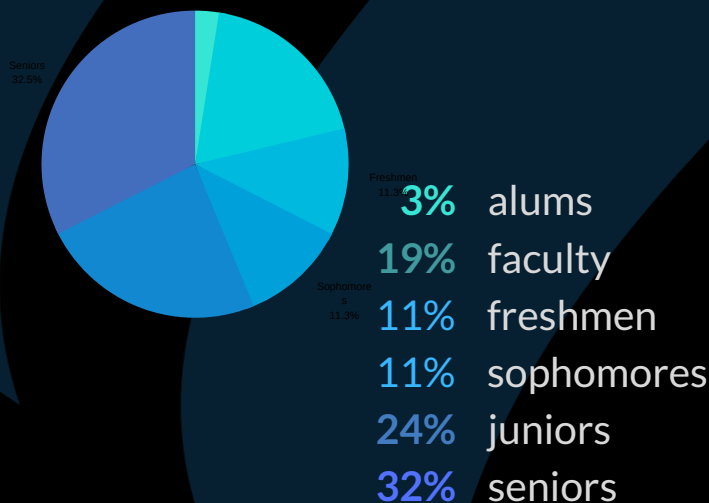
Harvard University
Boston University
Wellesley College
MIT

Total Number of Majors Represented: **24**

Total Number of Universities Represented: **25**

Of our university attendees, there was a wide range of class representation.

Total Number of Community Members Present: **74**



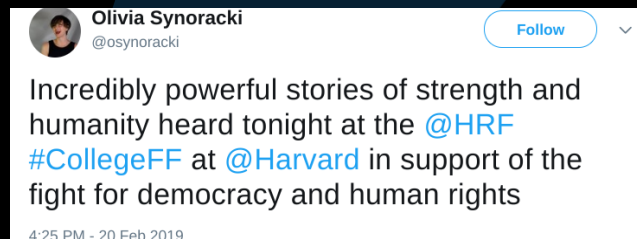
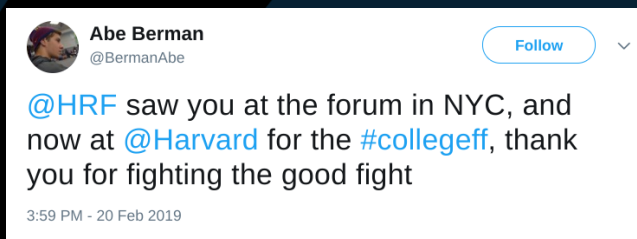
IN THE MEDIA

Following the event, HRF maintained a strong presence in the media through both traditional platforms and social media.

Immediately after the event, The Harvard Crimson, one of the nation's leading university publications, published an article showcasing our speakers. Both Enes Kanter and Abdalaziz Alhamza appeared on BBC/PRI's radio program, "The World," allowing the HRF speakers to have an even broader platform to discuss their ongoing work.

CFF Boston's speakers also helped to win media attention by posting about the event on their personal social media accounts. Stephen Pinker (**526K followers**) live-tweeted the event, and Enes Kanter (**426K followers**) tweeted a post-event thank you, generating activity from many followers who had never before engaged with, or perhaps heard of, CFF and HRF.

Attendees also took to social media to express their support for the event, leading to #collegeff becoming a "trending" topic on Twitter:



AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

HRF sent out a post-event survey to all event attendees. Based on this data, experiences at the Forum have been extraordinarily positive:

100% of survey respondents said they would recommend the event to others.

84% of survey respondents rated the experience a seven out of ten or higher, in terms of satisfaction.

40% rated the experience a ten.

70% of survey respondents said that they were interested in bringing CFF to their campus.

We asked:

What was your key takeaway from the event?

What was your favorite part of the event?

What could be improved about the event?

They said:

Regular people deciding that enough is enough is all it takes to bring about change.

Connecting with others who attended the event and actively listening to the insightful questions and discussion that took place

Hacerlo más seguido y con más tiempo!
--
Do it more often and with more time!

SUCCESSSES

Based on the post-event survey and analysis from our University Programs Team, HRF has identified several key strategies that made CFF in Boston particularly successful:

- Our lineup of speakers represented a wide array of backgrounds, which both allowed the event to connect with a larger audience and painted a more vivid picture of the global human rights regime.
- The two-pronged approach to social media, combined with the teaser videos, proved to be very successful in promoting the event on the ground.
- Speakers' interviews in the general media helped to attract attendees from the non-collegiate Boston community.
- Reaching out to multiple universities in the western Massachusetts area had the dual effect of both increasing overall attendance numbers and diversifying the audience. Many of the universities represented by attendees, such as Emerson College and MIT, do not have specialized disciplines or concentrated majors in human rights. This conference was likely some attendees' first opportunity to learn about the global human rights regime from activists themselves.

GET INVOLVED

Interested in joining the movement?

Internships and Careers

We have a robust, paid internship program, as well as regular full-time openings in our growing organization. For more information, visit hrf.org/careers.

Volunteer

We are always looking for volunteers with a variety of skills to help with events on campuses and on our international stage.

Start a College Freedom Forum or Oslo Scholars Program Chapter

Contact us if you are interested in hosting a CFF or Oslo Scholars chapter at your university. Email college@hrf.org or scholars@hrf.org for more information.

Attend Our Events

We host events about human rights across the world. Attending these are a great way to become informed, and to join and contribute to our large network of activists.

Follow Us on Social Media



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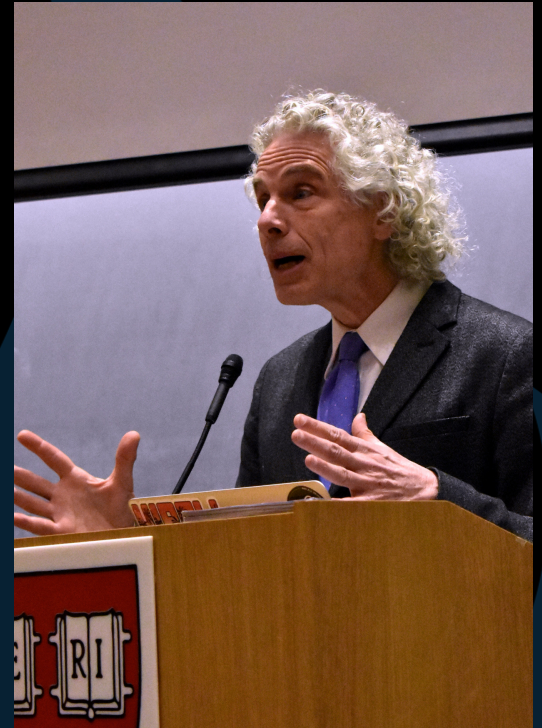


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EVENT PHOTOS



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