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## **MCW'S 20<sup>TH</sup> YOUNG LEADERS ACCESS PROGRAM RETREAT INSPIRES GLOBAL YOUTH LEADERS TO BE CHANGE MAKERS**

**New York, NY, August 7, 2017** — MCW, an organization dedicated to empowering youth to become positive agents of change in their communities, convened thirty-seven participants and fifteen mentors from different corners of the world to participate in MCW's 20<sup>th</sup> Young Leaders Access Program Retreat held at Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont and New York University in New York City.

Participants entered the retreat with a social change idea they would like to address in their local communities. Topic areas included gender equality, community development, education, youth empowerment, environmental, and health issues. During the retreat, vision plan facilitators, guest speakers, MCW board members and staff, and mentors provided guidance, offered inspiration, shared knowledge and skills to help participants develop their vision plans and equip them with tools needed to actualize change in their communities.

Representing twenty-six countries and territories, including Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kashmir Territory, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Philippines, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Tanzania, United States of America, Vietnam and Zimbabwe, the retreat fostered a vibrant platform for cultural exchange and dialogue. The young leaders shared their respective cultures through music, dance, videos, and informational presentations.

David Felipe, a participant from Colombia said "It was such a great experience, not only because I learned how to write down my ideas in a more organized way, but also because now I have 50 people looking after my project and its success. Also I had my doubts about the way I wanted to develop the project, but now I think this is the biggest impact the program had on me, I am not afraid of starting, instead I'm excited about it."

"We had a very diverse group of individuals who showed concern not only for the issues in their countries but also for the other participants from different parts of the world," said Young Leaders Program Coordinator, Nitya Ramanathan. "We have the privilege of helping our participants turn their vision plans into actionable change by deepening their understanding of the issues they hope to resolve, challenging their critical thinking, sharpening their skills and expanding their network."

Thought-provoking and inspiring presentations were given by representatives from What Better Looks Like, Muck Rack & Shorty Awards, Stony Brook University and the HeforShe Campaign, SoundBoard Consulting, and Kulisha, B Labs.

The program also provided participants with educational tools required to make change in a globalized world. This included networking, social media strategy, pitching ideas, telling your story, working in multi-cultural environments, building a website and public speaking skills.

Camille Clayton, a participant from the United States said “the program taught me so much more than skills to succeed as a leader. I realized that I am a global citizen, that I not only have an innate drive to change the world but the power to as well.”

The retreat concluded with the annual Open Doors Ceremony hosted by Year Up New York on August 3, 2017. The celebratory event featured remarks by Eddie Bergman, MCW Co-founder and President of the Board of Directors; South African Permanent Ambassador to the United Nations Hon. Jerry Matjila; Dr. Charles Robbins, MCW Board Member and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of the Undergraduate Colleges at Stony Brook University; Khalid Elachi, Chief Operating Officer at MCW; and Nitya Ramanathan, Coordinator of the YLP.

The first Roberta Richin Vision Plan award was presented by Laurette Richin, the late Roberta’s sister, to Lourence Balatbat from the Philippines for his vision plan to open a library in his local community. Honorary mentions went to Mohammad Towhidul Aziz from Bangladesh for his vision plan of creating opportunities for lower income families to have access to education and Camille Clayton from USA for her vision to change the standard of beauty around the world. The night was filled with gratitude and celebration for an amazing end to the program. The Roberta Richin Vision Plan award was created in honor of the late Roberta Richin, a recipient of MCW’s Lifetime Achievement Award winner in 2016, Board Emeritus of MCW’s Board of Directors. Roberta devoted her life to advancing equity, building capacity and increasing opportunity so every young person learns well, stays safe, graduates and participates in a rewarding civic and private life.

During the 2017 YLP, MCW received significant support from the New York and Vermont communities through in-kind donations and gifts from sponsors [Ben & Jerry’s](#), [Champlain College](#), [Chipotle Mexican Grill](#), [Ess-a-Bagel](#), [NYU School of Professional Studies](#), [Chick-fil-A](#), [Insomnia Cookies](#) and [4imprint](#).

To view photos of MCW’s Young Leaders Program retreat, please visit: [MCW’s Facebook Page](#)

