

Radical Hospitality In Vermont Cities And Towns



VIA leaders look on as a town manager adopts the Declaration of Inclusion.

The Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA) project, “Radical Hospitality in Vermont Cities and Towns,” is striving to obtain passage of the Declaration of Inclusion (DOI) in all 246 Vermont municipalities. When a town adopts the DOI, it commits to condemning racism or discrimination in any form and to treat everyone fairly and equally in all actions, policies and operating procedures. The DOI was created by an ad hoc group of four caring citizens who want Vermont to be a more welcoming and inclusive state.

Some small towns in Vermont think of themselves as quintessential New England villages. With populations of 1,000 or fewer, they are communities where neighbours help neighbours, doors are left unlocked and produce from gardens is shared generously.

When VIA volunteers approach a town’s staff or elected leaders, they often are told that the community is welcoming, and the town does not need to adopt a statement to prove it. Yet, in November 2023, three young men of Palestinian descent were shot at close range on the street of a Vermont town. Vermonters state wide were shocked and saddened at the horrific act of violence. In the wake of the tragedy, the Radical Hospitality Project returned to one small town and met with five community leaders who had previously rejected the need for a written commitment to inclusion. This time, when the VIA group advocated for the DOI with tearful stories of personal impact from the recent shooting, community leaders unanimously passed the declaration that evening.

Making a strong, demonstrative statement of radical hospitality and inclusion is a critical first step in the commitment to justice.

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