

ADL National Leadership Summit Reflections by Alan H. Frosh



The 2014 National Leadership Summit marked a watershed moment in my involvement in both my community and the Anti-Defamation League. It was at once inspiring and challenging, comfortable and overwhelming.

I applied to be a Sturm Fellow because I wanted to enrich my experience in the Jewish community; I was largely ignorant, shamefully, of the ADL's broader mission to secure justice and fair treatment for all. I was so impressed at the Summit that the two parts of the ADL's charge are *never* separate – our work to protect the Jewish people from harm and anti-Semitism only serves to deepen our commitment to serving all other people who experience discrimination or the specter of hatred. To hear a broad cross-section of American thought leaders – attorneys, activists, officials, legislators – speak with universal reverence for the ADL's work across a multitude of issues was refreshing, enlivening and a little intimidating.

We were fortunate to be in Washington last week, as two incidents underscored the need for the ADL and its vigorous dual advocacy. Donald Sterling's comments became public and the ADL was very quick to condemn his odious and hateful views; shortly thereafter, the Secretary of State's remarks about the Israeli "apartheid" state caused a furor among American Jews, and the ADL responded with equally rapid censure. Few organizations have the credibility to weigh in on these disparate but related issues; the Anti-Defamation League has earned its reputation as the country's foremost defender of human rights and I'm very proud to be associated with this organization.

As I reflect on the lessons from the Summit, I am struck by two themes – patience and responsibility. Many speakers reminded the Summit's participants that civil rights work requires a certain patience, as progress comes slowly to those who continue forward in light of tremendous and often immovable obstacles. As young professionals, we want to make an immediate impact; our generation is frequently characterized by a distinct and broad impatience, so this charge presents a clear challenge. The Sturm Fellowship, as part of the Glass Leadership Institute, provides a conduit to measure our progress accurately and realistically, saving us from the powerless feeling that might otherwise develop.

To that end, however, the Summit's most important lesson focuses on the role that we each play in defending human rights in our communities. As future leaders, it is incumbent upon us to aggressively advocate for all of our neighbors – both those who have a voice and especially those who don't – and the Summit continuously stressed that message. While it was emotionally exhausting to begin the conference's agenda with a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, it set an indispensable tone for the conversations to follow: when good people remain silent in the face of oppression, bigotry and intolerance flourish without restraint. I am eager to add my voice to those fighting these detestable forces and I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve an organization as valuable, venerated and vigorous as the Anti-Defamation League.