

Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN) Global Convening Report

Hello!

In November of 2023, Fresh Tracks took part in the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solution's Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN) Global Convening held in Mombasa, Kenya. Zenetta Zepeda, a youth leader from Fresh Tracks and a member of the Sicangu Lakota and Navajo Nation and I had the privilege of representing Fresh Tracks at this event, which brought together communities from around the world to exchange knowledge, elevate youth leadership, and focus on resilience.

As a member of the Fresh Tracks and Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions teams, I am grateful to be part of a network that shares a common vision grounded in love, community, and prioritizing youth voices. The GOYN Global Convening provided a platform for youth from diverse communities worldwide to discuss the challenges they face and showcase the solutions they have developed. It was a gathering entirely centered on youth, with every panel, stage, and session featuring youth in leadership, facilitation, or active participation. The principle was clear: no discussions about youth without youth.

Randy Marquez from Fundacion Corona captured the essence, "Youth aren't the future; they are the present, building the future for the next generation."

This report highlights the key moments of Fresh Tracks' participation in the GOYN Global Convening, particularly focusing on panels addressing youth partnerships and resilience. Grounded in action, Fresh Tracks is committed to advancing youth and community-led solutions, with a focus on harnessing the healing power of the outdoors, culture, and wellbeing.

With gratitude,
Andrea Wagner
Senior Program Associate
Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions, Fresh Tracks

Fresh Tracks

Fresh Tracks is a community-led, cross-cultural initiative rooted in the healing power of culture and the outdoors for civic leadership. Fresh Tracks uses the power of the outdoors as a safe and supportive platform for leadership development and civic engagement through a cross-cultural learning strategy that strengthens cultural competence and community cohesion for its youth and young adult participants and their communities. Rooted in Indigenous values, Fresh Tracks is a program of the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions (AFCS). The mission of the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions is to support community collaboration, including collective impact that enables communities to effectively address their most pressing challenges.

Global Opportunity Youth Network

The Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN) is a multi-stakeholder initiative committed to creating place-based systems shifts to increase economic opportunities for youth. Working with anchor partners and situated in communities around the world, GOYN works to create economic mobility for “Opportunity Youth,” young people aged 15-29 who are out of school, unemployed, or working in informal jobs. GOYN’s approach focuses on multi-sector collaboration and participatory solution design with an emphasis on equity, systems-level change, and amplifying the voices of youth.

The 4th annual Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN) Global Convening took place in Mombasa, Kenya. The GOYN Global Convening brought together partners and leaders from across the globe to connect, learn, and build community. GOYN partners and Opportunity Youth leaders tapped into their resilience and innovation to share ideas, resources, and methodologies related to building sustainable livelihood pathways. Defining resilience as the ability to deal with adversity, withstand shocks, and continuously adapt and accelerate as disruptions and crises arise, the GOYN Convening uplifted stories and shared practices that build societal and economic resilience in our network.

Andrea Wagner, a Program Associate with Fresh Tracks, contributed to the panel discussion by emphasizing the significance of collaboration between youth and adults. She specifically spotlighted the Fresh Tracks Youth and Young Adult Wellbeing Project, underscoring the importance of youth conducting their own research on their own terms and defining wellbeing in their communities.



“The challenges that youth face are the challenges youth are informed to solve” - Andrea Wagner

Additional panelists included Jamiel Alexander of the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions, John Awiel Diing of EARTH University, and Pia Saunders Campbell of the International Youth Foundation.



Photo by GOYN Mombasa and Swahilipot Hub



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Re-Centering Youth Resilience

This panel was dedicated to exploring the overarching theme of the convening, which was resilience. More specifically, the panel aimed to explore how young individuals conceptualize resilience and observe its manifestations in their daily lives. The discussion was expertly moderated by Brandon Hernandez, a young staff member at GOYN Barranquilla, Fundación Corona. He underscored the collaborative effort of diverse young people in redefining resilience on their own terms and sharing their visions for a resilient future.

The panelists included Zenetta Zepeda, a Fresh Tracks Leader and Wellbeing Project Youth Researcher; Emily Achieng, a youth partner at GOYN Mombasa; and Chaitanya Bavdhane, a youth partner at GOYN Pune.

When asked about strategies or recommendations that Zenetta had on building resilience, Zenetta responded,

“Mitakuye Oyasin is an Indigenous philosophy reflecting the interconnectedness of the people and the world around us. Resilience is living that value for the seven generations who walked before and those who will walk this world after me.”
- Zenetta Zepeda



Photo by GOYN Mombasa and Swahilipot Hub

She discussed navigating past and present issues that are prevalent in Indigenous communities, as well as various cultural philosophies to envision a resilient future rooted in Indigenous knowledge and values

Acknowledgements

Since time immemorial, Native communities across the Americas have demonstrated resilience and resistance in the face of violent efforts to separate them from their land, culture, and each other. Indigenous people remain at the forefront of movements for justice, equity, the protection of nature and the life it sustains. Fresh Tracks is aware that we walk, support, and work on Native land. Native American communities continue to thrive and lead the movements for human rights today. The Fresh Tracks team acknowledges the critical and necessary step to honor Native communities and their leadership to build an equitable future for all. Fresh Tracks encourages all to uncover truths of the original inhabitants of the land we all walk on.

This work is made possible by a collaboration between the Forum for Community Solutions, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Center for Indigenous Health at Johns Hopkins University, the Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health at Colorado School of Public Health, CUNY School of Professional Studies Youth Studies Programs, Fresh Tracks, Hello Insight, Intergenerational Change Initiative, LBC Action, National Recreation Foundation, Native Americans in Philanthropy, Network for the Development of Children of African Descent, REI Cooperative Action Fund, Treeline Foundation, The Tides Foundation, Andrus Family Fund, the Schmidt Family Foundation and the leadership of young diverse leaders rooted in community action and the healing power of the outdoors.



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