

## **Empowering the English-Speaking Spiritist Movement in the USA**

Following a tradition that started in 2007 after the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Spiritist Symposium, U.S. Spiritist directors and coordinators met on April 20, 2008 (the day after the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Spiritist Symposium in NY) to discuss the progress of the English-speaking Spiritist movement, while empowering and uniting it in the United States.

Representatives of 13 U.S. Spiritist centers<sup>1</sup> gathered together at the headquarters of the Spiritist Group of New York to discuss new strategies to help disseminate Spiritism in English. A representative of the Canada spiritualist movement and the representative of the International Spiritist Council also participated.

### **SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS AT THE MEETING**

#### **1) Promote local English-speaking events at least once a year.**

- ❖ Organizing local, regional or State Spiritist events in the English language may advantageously bring:
  - newcomers to Spiritist centers
  - expose potential local speakers and coordinators
  - spread Spiritism beyond Spiritist Centers
  - unite participating local, regional, State-wide Spiritist centers
  
- ❖ We shall not depend on International Spiritist speakers to run our national spiritist movement. We need to empower our national resources.
  
- ❖ Having yearly national symposia is not enough to boost the movement.

---

<sup>1</sup>The following were the participants in this meeting on April 20, 2008:

João Korngold, Jussara Korngold, Frederico Gouveia, Elmo Deslandes, Livia Sandoval - SGNY (NY)  
 Vanessa Anseloni, Daniel Santos, Fabiana F. Moura, Carol Strosnider, Isabela Vieira, Leonardo Vieira – SSB (MD)  
 Bernadete Leal - AKC (San Diego, CA)  
 Renata Taveira - JASS (Pittsburgh, PA)  
 Suzana Simões, Marcelo Netto - CLSG (North Miami, FL)  
 Mauricio Cisneiros Filho - CSSC (Pompano Beach, FL)  
 Eduardo Guimarães, Helder Martins, Hugo Melo - IESS (NY)  
 Ricardo Mastroleo - Allan Kardec Spiritist Educational (TX)  
 Judith Peterschmitt, Stephen Honton - AKSSMA (MA)  
 Anisio Resem, Susana Resem - SSSD (San Diego, CA)  
 Daniel Assisi - Blossom (Los Angeles, CA)  
 Livia Trevisani - AKCSCO (Orlando, FL)  
 Patricia Estwood - Toronto  
 Aramando Velez - SISC (NJ)  
 Junara Araujo - CXSC (San Rafael, CA)  
 Antonio Cesar Perri de Carvalho – International Spiritist Council (ISC)

## 2) Build peace by disseminating Spiritism in the U.S.A.

We have been informed that the Spiritist dissemination is somewhat delayed in the USA. One of the main reasons is the avoidance of sharing the Spiritist knowledge in the English language. Also, Spirit communications to the International Spiritist Council have brought the information that the dissemination of the Spiritist movement is delayed in the world as well.

In the book *Entre Irmaos de Outras Terras* (pages 29-30, chapter 5, FEB), Andre Luiz asked William James when Spiritism will be known worldwide. And he replied, “It is a matter of time and it depends also on the goodwill of human beings (...) We have learned that no stable construction happens at the impulse of improvisation. The Spiritist harvest requires the sowing of Spiritist principles. And there is no efficient sowing without dedicated sowers. Let us increase our individual contribution and elevate our level of understanding in regard to our responsibility with the dissemination of Spiritism. (...) Each individual, each group and each country will get from Spiritism what they do with it. We believe it is possible to summarize the guidelines for all of us in the following program: balanced feelings; elevated thoughts; constructive conversations; study always; and serve more.”

For Spiritists living in the USA, a country that is in the turmoil of a war, we ask:

- What are we, Spiritists, doing to help in the state of affairs of this nation?
- Do we also have responsibility in the current situation by delaying to disseminate the Spiritist message?

## 3) Start Spiritist meetings and centers

Here are some tips:

- ❖ Revisit the list of insights from last year’s meeting (available at [www.spiritistsymposium.org](http://www.spiritistsymposium.org)).
- ❖ Do not get discouraged by the number of participants in the meetings. If the number of people is low, most likely it serves the purpose to improve the quality of the meetings, materials and practitioners. The concern regarding the number of people distracts from the core work.
- ❖ Do not mix Portuguese and English meeting in one day. English-speaking people do not feel welcomed in an environment where the majority is speaking another unknown language. It is better to open a meeting in another location where only English-Speaking meetings are held.
- ❖ You may use tools to gather new people such as Meet up.com.
- ❖ Having a welcome package for newcomers with a CD introducing teachings and messages, inspirational notes and a brochure (like in Unity and Religious Science churches or other organizations). The Spiritist Society of Baltimore is preparing a welcome kit that includes an introductory DVD on Spiritism.
- ❖ Implementing different dynamics such as shorter lectures (30 minutes) followed by discussion may be more appealing to the American public. Short lectures

format assist practitioners who are just starting to become more comfortable speaking Spiritism in English.

- ❖ There is need of Spiritist materials to guide small groups.
- ❖ We shall not call Spiritist volunteers ‘workers’. It would be best to call them Spiritist practitioners (people who are practicing Spiritism, but do not have compensation).
- ❖ Also, Spiritist centers should have their volunteers and practitioners sign consent forms in order to avoid having the spiritist group or center sued in the future. Centers have been sued in Brazil seeking for volunteers who wanted compensation. The SSB has designed a working consent form for all types of volunteers and practitioners.

#### 4) Spiritist materials available and needed

##### Available materials:

- ❖ There are audio books already available by Divaldo Franco and Raul Teixeira. The recently launched audio book *Unfolding our Spiritual nature: Path of Harmony* by Raul Teixeira is a great way to share Spiritism with newcomers.
- ❖ The TVCEI and the SSB offer Spiritist workshops and talks in the English language 24/7 through their websites.
- ❖ All the 20 posters exhibited at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Spiritist Symposia will soon be available at [www.spiritistsymposia.org](http://www.spiritistsymposia.org). Spiritist meetings and events may use poster sessions as another educational tool to disseminate Spiritism.
- ❖ The SSB has recently launched the Roadmap Program for Spiritist Study and Practice which provides workbooks and lessons in DVD. See more at their website.
- ❖ There are free downloadable books and materials at [www.sgny.org](http://www.sgny.org) and [www.ssbaltimore.org](http://www.ssbaltimore.org)
- ❖ The Spiritist Magazine ([www.thespiritistmagazine.com](http://www.thespiritistmagazine.com)) is also available.

##### Needed materials:

- ❖ More audiobooks, mp3, and podcast files may help in the dissemination of Spiritism.
- ❖ Having Spiritist books at hand may also help to disseminate Spiritism while outside Spiritist centers.
- ❖ There is need of translation of other core Spiritist books such as the ones by Andre Luiz/Francisco Xavier.

#### 5) Understanding our American Audience

- ❖ The article *Why American Spirituality Needs Spiritism* (in The Spiritist Magazine) brings lots of insights on this parallel between Spiritism and the American Culture.
- ❖ Also, listen to the suggested audiobook *The Sacred Contract of America* by Carolyn Myss, one of the most prominent Spiritual speakers in the U.S.A.

- ❖ Most Americans who are currently drawn to Spiritism are open-minded and have already experienced New Thought/New Age philosophies. Many of them find out about Spiritism through John of God.
- ❖ People may be drawn to the centers because of the phenomena, messages and passes therapy. Some may not be so interested in studying Spiritism. Thus, it is very important that Spiritist directors and coordinators be serious and consistent in their task to educate the public about the seriousness of mediumship and the need to study and have discipline.
- ❖ It is important to be familiarized with Spiritualist literature in the U.S.A. in order to be able to bridge it with Spiritism. However, there is no need to know everything that is out there in order to begin Spiritist meetings. As Spiritist speakers become more confident about their Spiritist knowledge, people will start to come.
- ❖ Revisiting our role model in the Spiritist dissemination, Allan Kardec, we observe that he was open-minded and easily made parallels between Spiritism and other philosophies and sciences.
- ❖ We shall not mold our meetings and centers in the same way that it happens in Brazil, for instance. We need a culturally-fit Spiritist movement. Thus, knowing the American culture and its history may help.
- ❖ We shall not be afraid to do our work.
- ❖ We shall also consider the public that consider themselves Christian and are unhappy with fundamentalist religions.

#### **6) English-speaking Spiritist meetings and centers empower immigrants as well**

- ❖ Despite language barriers, running Spiritist meetings may empower immigrants and improve their lives, as it boosts their communication skills and propel their cultural knowledge.
- ❖ Centers may offer English lessons for immigrant public and community.

#### **7) To foster English-Speaking Spiritist meetings is charity.**

- ❖ Emmanuel: Spiritism requires from us one important charity: the charity of the dissemination of Spiritism.
- ❖ If we do not offer public meetings in English, American people feel left out. We need to be inclusive, not exclusive.
- ❖ It also reaches out to children and youth groups in Spiritist centers that actually do not read other languages, but English.

#### **8) Beyond language, there is love, understanding and commitment.**

- ❖ Spirituality goes beyond language. It is not all about language. We all have different lives and experiences. The exchange of common ideas comes with the language of the heart as well.

- ❖ If there is a will, there is a way. There is immense work ahead of us and we need committed people.

**9) There is need of investment and support in the English-Speaking movement**

- ❖ It is important to support and invest in English-speaking Spiritist groups.
- ❖ Also, there is need to raise funds for American Spiritist movement.

**10) Spiritist immigrants in the U.S. were prepared to contribute in this transition.**

- ❖ Divaldo Franco has recently mentioned that Brazilians and other Latin American Spiritists were actually prepared to promote the English speaking movement in the United States. We may not recall the commitment. All we need is faith, a positive attitude, no hesitation. And just do it.