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Hidden No More: Here's how the State Department is Empowering International Women Leaders in STEM

October 29, 2018



The award-winning film *Hidden Figures* inspired viewers across the world with the true story of the courageous and talented African-American women whose contributions at NASA in the 1960s significantly contributed to launching the first U.S. astronaut into orbit. This momentum sparked an [International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#) in 2017 that brought 48 women leaders who represent "hidden talent" in their home countries to the United States to explore U.S. efforts to prepare women and girls for careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

In October 2018, 49 women leaders from around the world arrived in the United States to begin the second year of the *#HiddenNoMore* program, including professionals in the arts. Between the two years, the almost 100 women traveled to 16 U.S. cities, including Syracuse, Washington D.C., and Boston in the east; Louisville, Tulsa, Lincoln, and Chicago in the heartland, Pensacola, Charleston, Greensboro, Huntsville, Little Rock, and Orlando in the south, and Albuquerque, Seattle, and Los Angeles in the west.

The women participated in workshops, and met with organizations related to their fields, like the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics and Laboratory, National Geographic, and the Geena Davis Institute, to cultivate relationships with their American counterparts and examine women's contributions to STEM. They explored best practices in the effective recruitment, training, and development of women and other underrepresented groups in STEM and learned how they can institutionalize opportunities for women in their own countries. The film's distributor, Disney Studios, provides significant support to the program, facilitating meetings at both National Geographic and at the studios in Los Angeles.

Two of the stars of *Hidden Figures*, [Taraji P. Henson](#) and [Octavia Spencer](#), voiced their support for the program on Twitter.

How *#HiddenNoMore* Began

Throughout 2017, U.S. Embassies and Consulates in more than 100 countries screened the movie *Hidden Figures* for international audiences, generating discussions on racial equality, gender equality, and women in STEM careers. These successful screenings inspired an IVLP, *Hidden No More: Empowering Women Leaders in STEM*.

Participants return home with new ideas to put into action

After her 2017 IVLP, Dr. Jessica Wade pledged to write one Wikipedia page a day to highlight women and people of color who are working/ have worked in STEM. Almost 700 Wiki pages later, Jess is recognized around the world for this effort and many others that promote women and girls in STEM. She was awarded the Institute of Physics Daphne Jackson Medal and Prize as well as being recognized in the Queen's 2019 Birthday Honors for acting as an internationally recognized ambassador of STEAM.

The 2017 cohort regularly hosts local events to promote women in STEM, often inviting their IVLP colleagues as special guests. Alumna physicist Sandra Alvarenga showed an audience in San Salvador clear examples of STEM programs for young women that could be replicated by the State Department's [American Spaces](#) network.

Likewise, the 2018 participants added their voices and skills to promoting women and girls in STEM by breaking barriers in academia, creating inclusive hackathon events, and conducting training in science diplomacy. The 2018 *#HNM* alumnae Diana Elizabeth Jiménez de Contreras, of El Salvador and Daniela Tarhuni Navarro, from Mexico collaborated to develop a course for university researchers, professors, and journalists on effective science communication. The course emphasized science communication within the university setting and reviewed methods to share significant university research with society at large allowing academics to impact their communities in a positive way.

A third project will launch in October 2019. Follow the group's journey on social media at *#HiddenNoMore*, and learn about all the advances that women will continue to make after participating in the IVLP.



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