

From Monday June 16 through Friday June 27 ARA co-founder and SPF founding member Lydia Asana attended the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) for Church-based Community and Economic Development at the Harvard Divinity School. She was one of 39 participants selected for this unique opportunity in 2008

The SLI program was extremely intensive with every aspect of this well thought out program serving a particular relevant purpose. Lectures and case studies characterized each day. Discussions and critical thinking were greatly encouraged. Both formal and informal discussion groups further chewed over themes and subject matter presented during daily sessions.

Presenters at SLI 2008 included faculty members of various schools at Harvard University such as the Divinity School, the Kennedy School of Government and the Business School to name a few. There were also pastors of churches renowned for their successful community and economic development projects all over the United States. SLI alumni who have successfully realized their projects and representatives from relevant organizations and companies provided experienced perspectives and noteworthy information on community and economic development related topics.

Lectures included topics such as community development and transformation, entrepreneurship, non profit leadership, finance, and branding. There were several presentations on real estate related aspects of community development as well. Case Studies offered a reference point for discussions. Real cases hand picked from all over the world where analyzed. From these lessons were learnt, pre-existing knowledge challenged, and the desire to carry out successful projects nourished. Participants experienced a unique blend of education, motivation, networking, and spiritual nourishment that lead to the formation of friendships that are sure to last for years to come

Seeking to bring about not only spiritual, but also social and economic renewal amidst underserved and underprivileged populations sometimes seems overwhelming. The Summer Leadership Institute at Harvard Divinity School provides an uplifting venue where dreams and visions of bringing a new ray of light in dim pockets of society no longer seem unachievable. It is our sincere hope that many reading these words will seek to participate in and /or provide support for the Summer Leadership Institute at Harvard University.