

# Leadership tour group stops in Omaha

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Ever think about what it would take to change the world — for the better?

About a dozen young adults from seven countries have been looking for input on that very subject this week in Omaha.

The group's 10-week, 13-stop tour of the United States is sponsored by an international organization called Initiatives of Change. The "future leaders" are four weeks into their trip and will leave Saturday for Tulsa, Okla.

"The core philosophy of Initiatives of Change is that any change you want to see in the world, whether it is a conflict resolved or a new kind of leadership, has to start in your own life," said David Ruffin. "Mahatma Gandhi said you have to be the change that you want to see in the world."

Ruffin, a 25-year-old from Virginia, is one of three Americans

## Young adults from seven countries are learning strategies for positive changes.

on the trip. The United States was chosen for the inaugural tour because of its cultural diversity.

Zoryana Borbulevych, a 24-year-old from Ukraine, said she will share what she learns when she returns to her job as an international relations coordinator for a private school system.

Many stereotypes she had about Americans have been dispelled, she said.

"I learned that (Americans) are not just attached to their corporate hosts, and they do care what they look like to the world," Borbulevych said. "They are great people, actually."

Wherever the participants visit, they share their impressions with the residents.

In Omaha, they discussed conflict resolution at a University of Nebraska at Omaha workshop,

and they talked about prejudice with students at Westside High School and St. Richard Elementary School.

Will Jenkins, a group leader from Washington, D.C., said the feedback from students is especially enjoyable.

"What we really like to do is let them identify their own concerns," he said. "Then they can come to their own conclusions and find their own answers to solve problems between them."

Florencia Ruiz, 24, a nutritionist from Argentina, said jobs and education are key concerns in her country, which has been racked by political turmoil. About 75 of her friends and family members have gone abroad to find work.

"The middle class is gone," she said. "There is only the poor and the very wealthy."

When Ruiz returns to her home in Buenos Aires, she wants to help people reorganize the education and health systems.

"The people really want to learn things, but there is no one to teach them," she said. "I need to take baby steps to get these things to the people."

Ruiz said the tour is helping her realize that there is much more division within the United States than she expected to find. She pointed to racial conflicts.

"In my country, we see the idols like Tiger Woods, Serena Williams, Eddie Murphy, Michael Jordan and think that there are no (racial) problems here, but there are," she said.

"You are the United States, but how united are you?"