The International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life sponsors Brandeis undergraduate students to do integrated course work and field work related to coexistence and issues of ethics and social justice in a global context.

ETHICS AND COEXISTENCE STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS 1999

Six Brandeis undergraduates have participated in the program in 1999. During the spring semester, they enrolled in a course, “Topics in Ethics, Justice, and Public Life”, on the theme “Coexistence and the Quest for Justice.” Over the summer, they worked in internships on several continents. In the fall of 1999, each student is working with a mentor on the Brandeis faculty.

This exhibition presents the work done by the students during their internship. They are currently working on completing written projects that document their work in greater detail.

THE ETHICS AND COEXISTENCE STUDENT FELLOWS, 1999

Intern in Argentina:
Wendi Adelson, ’01

Intern in Jerusalem:
Tamara Beliak, ’00

Intern in The Gambia:
Lauren Elson, ’00

Intern in Bosnia-Herzegovina:
Keren Ghitis, ’01

Intern in Grenada:
Karen Hovav, ’00

Intern in China:
Devika Mahadevan, ’00

Left to right: Tamara Beliak, Wendi Adelson, Karen Hovav, Keren Ghitis, Devika Mahadevan, Lauren Elson

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Brandeis University
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This exhibit is supported by the Rice Family Foundation.
EDUCATION FOR MEMORY
AND THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE
FOR JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN
ARGENTINA

PROJECT GOALS
• To learn how the struggle for justice continues more than twenty years after the latest Argentine military dictatorship
• To learn about the political environment in which 30,000 people were “disappeared”
• To interview the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to understand what motivates them to continue their struggle

PERSONAL GOALS
• To understand my perspective as a North American, white, Jewish woman while embracing an Argentine vantage point through total immersion in language and culture
• To learn about the effectiveness of women by working with a grassroots organization based on the unifying theme of motherhood

Wendi Adelson
('01), Coral Springs, Florida
The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo - Linea Fundadora
Buenos Aires, Argentina
ACTIVITIES

• Compiled a ‘memory book’ of newspaper announcements
• Marched with the mothers every Thursday at the Plaza de Mayo
• Translated the mothers’ responses to requests from all over the world for support
• Translated documents and pamphlets about eliminating Third World Debt for the Dialogue 2000 Project of SERPAJ (Peace and Justice Service) headed by Nobel Prize Winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel
• Worked with SERPAJ-sponsored camp for abused and orphaned children

KEY DILEMMAS

— When, if ever, is a policy of ‘no reconciliation’ and ‘no forgetting’ counterproductive to a budding democracy?
— What is the meaning of ‘justice’ and how can justice be meaningfully achieved when President Menem pardoned all military officials?
— Is economic reparation an achievement of justice or a kind of economic prostitution?

IMPORTANT LEARNINGS

— Grief positively focused on eliminating injustice can fuel an entire movement.
— The more I was willing to give, to risk, to love, to overcome fears and insecurities, the richer and more successful were my experiences.
UNDERSTANDING JERUSALEM

PROJECT GOALS AT MEND:
- To prepare materials about children living in violence for a camp hosting Palestinian and Black South African youth
- To help Palestinian youth reflect on their positive and negative life experiences through writing
- To begin a curriculum for Jewish youth in the U.S. and Israel that is informative about Palestinian life without demonizing Israelis

PROJECT GOAL AT BAT SHALOM:
- To develop a website on the confiscation of Jerusalem ID cards

PERSONAL GOALS
- To address my fears of Palestinian civilians and of terrorism while coming to know Palestinian people as human beings
- To improve my Arabic
- To work towards common goals with Jewish Israeli coexistence workers

ACTIVITIES
- Organized workshops for Palestinian youth
- Visited Palestinian communities in Palestinian-controlled regions
- Wrote material for the web page on ID card confiscations
- Outlined workbook on ‘Stereotypes of Palestinians’ using writing by Palestinian youth

Tamara Beliak, (’00)
Los Angeles, California

Middle East Non-Violence and Democracy (MEND)
East Jerusalem
and Bat Shalom
West Jerusalem
KEY DILEMMAS

— In a context of extreme political inequality and pain on both sides, how can stereotypes be meaningfully addressed?

— Should I identify myself as a Jew when I am working with people for whom this knowledge would overtake all other emotions?

— How can I address the fears both of Jewish Israelis and of Palestinians, when my own experiences confirm the perceptions that give rise to their fears?

IMPORTANT LEARNINGS

— For many Palestinians, the best indicator of my care and respect was that I had studied Arabic language and Palestinian culture both before I arrived and during my stay.

— Fear is a very strong barrier.

— It seems that most Jewish Israelis are more concerned about the religious-secular split in Israel than about negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

— In Palestinian society, American women have more freedom than Palestinian women.
CULTURE PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION
IN THE GAMBIA, WEST AFRICA

PROJECT GOALS
- To preserve indigenous culture through the performance of traditional dances
- To sensitize the public on human rights issues using the performing arts
- To use aspects of the culture to educate the community

PERSONAL GOALS
- To learn about and be integrated into the West African community
- To experience, first-hand, the role of dance and music in the community
- To be accepted as a member of the dance troupe

ACTIVITIES
- Learned traditional dances and songs
- Interviewed artists in the community
- Performed with the troupe at public events
- Collaborated with administrators of cultural groups to establish goals and plans for the groups
- Served as an ambassador of the cultural groups to various members of the community

Lauren Elson
('00)
Thousand Oaks, California

Baatu Askar Wi
(The Voice of the Tribes)
Banjul, The Gambia
Cotton Tree Heritage Theater, Gambia Chapter
Serrekunda, The Gambia

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KEY DILEMMAS AND QUESTIONS

— Do traditional values hinder advancement?
— Can all of the tribes be accommodated through performance to promote equality? If so, how?
— What are the implications of sharing culture by teaching African music and dance to Caucasians?
— What responsibilities do I have now that I have learned traditional African music and dance?
— In a context of diverse cultures, can theater be used to disseminate information without minimizing tradition? What languages should be used? Whose values should be promoted?

IMPORTANT LEARNINGS

— Music and dance are integral aspects of West African culture, and can be used to attract large audiences as well as to provide new insights.
— The arts can reduce some of the barriers that result from poverty.
— Arts allow for the integration of traditions with new ideas.
— To communicate using dance, passion is more important than technique.
— Stereotypes of Americans are plentiful throughout the world; the arts provide a means for eliminating some of these.
MEDIA AND COEXISTENCE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

PROJECT GOALS

• To evaluate the influence and credibility of the media in Bosnia and to assess its potential contribution to reconciliation
• To explore the willingness of the different parties to coexist
• To assess the effectiveness of different approaches to generating openness to the possibility of a new, peaceful future.

PERSONAL GOALS

• To understand the history of the region and the roots of the conflict
• To assess the accuracy of the Western understanding of the conflict as primarily ethnic and nationalistic in character

ACTIVITIES

• To discover how each group in Bosnia constructs its own narrative
• To experience rapport with people from completely different backgrounds from myself

• Interviewed journalists, local and foreign media representatives, refugees, and local folks
• Collected information about ‘hate speech’ and media reconciliation projects
• Helped develop a ‘Reporting Diversity Manual,’ a guide for journalists on how to deal with prejudices and other sensitive issues
• Tried to enlist cooperation from several newspapers to cooperate on a ‘reconciliation campaign’ by publishing weekly articles on coexistence issues

Keren Ghitis
('01) Herzlia, Israel
Soros Media Center
Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina
KEY DILEMMAS

— Are Bosnians prepared to discuss reconciliation? Is their reluctance a matter of time, mentality, or something else?

— Is coexistence achievable when the leaders from the war period are still in power?

— What should be the role of the West in promoting reconciliation? Must the initiative come from local people?

— To what extent can the media play the role of educator and make a positive difference?

IMPORTANT LEARNINGS

— Reconciliation is not an isolated issue. A sound economy and proper education are essential foundations to reconciliation and coexistence.

— The electronic media has far more influence in Bosnia than the printed media.

— Television, radio and newspapers are not "magic tools." The media can at best only promote ongoing processes.

— It is easier to create hatred and antagonism than to build peace.

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GRENADA'S CHILDREN:
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON
A CARIBBEAN ISLAND

PROJECT GOALS
- To document the socio-economic conditions of children living in rural, low-income communities and to assess the impact of their circumstances on their educational performance

Karen Hovav
('00)
Upland, California

Grenada Education and Development Programme (GRENED)
Grenville, Grenada

- To evaluate how well GRENED addresses their needs and develop recommendations
- To lead GRENED-sponsored students on a path of self-reflection and personal growth

PERSONAL GOALS
- To learn how NGOs work and to understand their role
- To immerse myself in a culture very different from my own by developing relationships with the people of that culture
- To make a lasting contribution to the lives of the children
ACTIVITIES
- Developed and implemented a six-session program for the children
- Traveled to each of the parishes on the island to conduct one-on-one sessions with children living in income-poor, rural villages
- Interviewed parents, educators, and government officials about the educational system and obstacles in Grenada
- Organized children’s recreational activities, such as hiking, dinners, trips to the library, and internet sessions

KEY DILEMMAS
- Can a temporary, one-time grassroots initiative ensure a lasting and sustainable effect? If so, how?

-- Do I, as an outsider, have the right to impose my values, however well-intended, on children of another culture?
-- What methods are most practical and effective in promoting educational motivation and emotional well-being?
-- As a female, when is it safe to be friendly to males exhibiting a cultural norm of assertiveness? When am I justified in treating strangers differently based on their gender?

IMPORTANT LEARNINGS
- The educational needs of a society are intertwined with the social, economic and cultural needs.
- Positive role models play a much greater role in determining the educational outlook of a child than the economic wealth of the family.
- Although I had never considered myself “white” before, being perceived as a white woman made me realize the complexity and ambiguity of race in identity.
CLAIMING HALF THE SKY:
UNDERSTANDING WOMEN-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

Devika Mahadevan ('00), Mumbai, India

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
Beijing, The People's Republic of China

PROJECT GOAL
- To place women at the center of development planning and implementation in order to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources and other benefits to the society

PERSONAL GOALS
- Learning more about the development needs of Chinese women
- Building close relationships with a few ordinary Chinese women in Beijing
- Understanding Chinese women's experiences through an Indian woman's eyes

ACTIVITIES
- Helped organize UNIFEM events, including a public screening of a videoconference on a global campaign to eliminate domestic violence
- Visited sites for potential UNIFEM projects
- Explored issues and experiences of laid-off women, by visiting with them individually, and visiting centers and "help lines" established to support them
- Met with Women's Studies professors and women's activists
- Volunteered at "Rural Women Knowing All," a Chinese magazine
Women hold up half the sky. — Chinese proverb

KEY DILEMMAS
- It was hard to shed the image of ‘exotic foreigner’ and be treated as a regular person.
- My limited fluency in Chinese frustrated my desire to learn as much about the culture as I had hoped.
- I was often confronted by a blinding sense of guilt about having so much more than the women I met who were materially very poor.
- I was frustrated and upset by my difficulties in finding emotional connections with women of vastly different life experiences than mine.

IMPORTANT LEARNINGS
- I learned a sense of humility and appreciation for all that I have.
- By cooking, talking, laughing and working together I became close friends with my Chinese roommate. This friendship is, in itself, an achievement, accomplished through time, patience and constant effort, and produced an indescribable high.
- A majority of the women I met had an interesting combination of an intense commitment to the idea for social equality and empowerment, along with trepidation about exactly how to prioritize the great needs of Chinese women.

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The International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life

The mission of the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life is to engage people from around the world in examining questions of ethics, social justice, and moral responsibility through projects that draw on the strengths and confront the challenges of national, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious pluralism. The Ethics Center is a program of Brandeis University.

The Brandeis Initiative in Intercommunal Coexistence, a program of the Ethics Center, is designed to engage the university's students, faculty, and staff in an exploration of the dilemmas and possibilities that emerge when we seek to understand, to promote, and to enact respectful personal and communal relationships across differences such as those of religion, ethnicity, race, class, and political conflict. The Initiative has been made possible by a generous grant from the Alan B. Slifka Foundation.