On Conviction and Compromise

There is an odd moment in Steven Spielberg’s recent film “Lincoln.” Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania stands on the Senate floor in early 1865 to support the passage of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which will abolish slavery. Stevens rises to support abolition, but publicly denies that he believes in racial equality. He knows the amendment will fail if he expresses what the filmmakers portray as his core conviction.

As Stevens stammers through his reluctant denial, the John Williams score swells to a crescendo. Spielberg is celebrating in Hollywood’s language the senator’s willingness to compromise on principle in order to achieve an important political and moral end. It’s a jarring moment: Williams’ music trumpets the end of legal human bondage in the United States…at a moment when one of the film’s central characters utters a sentiment that is abhorrent to any believer in human rights and human dignity.

From the beginning, the exhibit was a catalyst for thinking and work at Brandeis about peacebuilding, reconciliation and coexistence. “The exhibition and the museum turned out to be extremely generative spaces for encounters: with ourselves, each other, the artworks, and with the history of violence, erasure and resilience that Dor Guez’s artwork documents with such composure and restraint,” says Cynthia Cohen, director of the Ethics Center’s Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts.

The Ethics Center collaborated with the Rose, the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, and a number of academic departments and student groups to host visits to Brandeis by people playing important roles in the quest for coexistence and reconciliation around the world.

A two-week residency in September by Farhat Agbaria, a coexistence facilitator based at Givat Haviva in Israel and Seeds of Peace, kicked off these exhibit-related events. Agbaria has facilitated encounters between Israelis and Palestinians for decades, and has been connected to the Ethics Center since 1998, when he explored coexistence and the quest for justice as a Brandeis International Fellow (an early Center program).

During his residency Agbaria, a Muslim Palestinian Israeli, met with Brandeis students and faculty, led several class sessions, engaged student social justice leaders and arts-related club leaders in discussions of how the arts can relate to social justice work, and led several class sessions.

continued on p. 6

continued on p. 4
Staff Highlights

In October Cynthia Cohen co-convened a roundtable on “Resilience, Arts and Social Transformation” at the University of British Columbia. She delivered the keynote at the “Mediating Peace: Reconciliation through Art, Music and Film” conference in Jerusalem in November. She also led a daylong workshop in Israel for Seeds of Peace educators and artists. Cohen convened the Arts and Peace Commission of the International Peace Research Foundation at its annual meeting in Japan in November, and presented a paper on “Building an Infrastructure for Peace.” Marci McPhee presented “Maximizing My Impact in the World” in September at the annual Millennium Campus Conference in Boston, together with Brandeis students Sarah Van Buren ’13, Paul Sukijthamapan ’13, Leila May Pascual ’15, and Miriam Wong ’14.

Leigh Swigart and Dan Terris attended the inaugural conference of iCourts in September in Denmark. Based at the University of Copenhagen, iCourts is a new interdisciplinary research center funded by the Danish National Research Foundation, with a mandate to study the increasingly important role of international courts and tribunals in the global legal order as well as in society and politics at large.

“Acting Together” Documentary in Seven Languages

Doors open to communities around the world

In the year since it was released “Acting Together on the World Stage” has been screened around the world. A demand for versions in other languages emerged as peacebuilders, educators and artists working in divided communities ordered copies for use in the field. In December the Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts completed translations in four languages: Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese and Spanish. Multilingual versions of the DVD will include subtitles for all of these languages, as well as Sinhala and Tamil, the primary languages of Sri Lanka.

The translations have been made possible by a generous gift from Elaine Reuben ’63, a feminist scholar with longstanding commitments to socially engaged cultural productions. For info and to order the documentary: brandeis.edu/ethics/peacebuildingarts/actingtogether

Brandeis Students Work to Reform Massachusetts Law

Read or download Advocacy for Policy Change: Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law on the Ethics Center’s website. The anthology features the work of students in the spring 2012 “Advocacy for Policy Change” course (LGLS 161b). Topics explored in 2012 included: domestic violence, health care for children, in-state tuition, mandatory foreclosure mediation, and paid sick leave. The course is being taught again in the spring 2013 semester. Advocacy for Policy Change is supported by generous multi-year commitments from Center Board member Norbert Weissberg and former Board member Judith Schneider. Find it here: brandeis.edu/ethics/pdfs/advocacy/Advocacy_for_Policy_Change_report_October_2012.pdf
From Bahrain to Brandeis and Back Again: The Ulafa’a Reconciliation Art Project

This April, 10 young visual artists from the Persian Gulf nation of Bahrain will visit Brandeis for a series of public events and intensive workshops as part of the Ulafa’a Reconciliation Art Project, an initiative supported by the U.S. Embassy in Bahrain in partnership with Bahraini artists and the Ethics Center’s Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts.

Ulafa’a is an art project that aims to create opportunities for people to express themselves and to strengthen relationships of respect and understanding among the different communities of Bahrain. (The Arabic term ulafa’a describes a group of people who are familiar with each other and possibly share common feelings.)

The project is based on the belief that people can express themselves through a variety of artistic forms, and that these expressions can facilitate communication and the sharing of stories.

Since the fall of 2012, project coordinators Tamadher Al Fahal (see photo at right) and Nada Al Aradi have been recruiting Bahraini visual artists working in a variety of genres to participate in the project.

The Bahraini artists as well as the founders of Ulafa’a will be in residence at Brandeis from April 14 to 20 participating in an intensive training conducted by Cynthia Cohen, director of the Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts. They will deepen skills in designing and developing community-based arts and oral history initiatives that strengthen communication and relationships across differences.

There will also be a public presentation by the artists at Brandeis University, and opportunities for them to connect with the Brandeis community.

Upon their return to Bahrain, the Ulafa’a project artists will engage people of diverse communities in Bahrain in conversations through a series of events that will include film screenings, panel discussions, live performances, and trainings.

More information about the presentation and public events related to this project will be available in the spring semester. Check for updates: brandeis.edu/ethics/peacebuildingarts/events

ETHICAL INQUIRY

Should peacebuilders encourage oppressed people to empathize with their oppressors?

What feelings and sensibilities should guide the stance that oppressed people take towards those who are members of the dominant community? What responses are just? What response will best contribute toward a more peaceful world? Should peacebuilders encourage oppressed people to empathize with their oppressors?

Explore these questions in an Ethical Inquiry researched and written by Shoshana Zeldner, MA ’12, Coexistence and Conflict, Heller School for Social Policy and Management; inspired by Farhat Agbaria’s residency at Brandeis (see page 1) and the Dor Guez exhibit 100 Steps to the Mediterranean at the Rose Art Museum: brandeis.edu/ethics/ethicalinquiry/2012/September.html

Tamadher Al Fahal (right) and Khalid Aljabri (left) offering free hugs as a part of the campaign “introducing Ulafa’a project” in market 338, Adliya, Bahrain

Samira (on the left) with her classmates, the Christian Orthodox Girls School, Jaffa, 1945, from the series, Scanograms #1, 2010, manipulated readymade, archival inkjet print, 23 ½ x 29 ½ inches ©Dor Guez

For more on the Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts: brandeis.edu/ethics/peacebuildingarts
Among those who organized a session with Agbaria was the Brandeis Israel Public Affairs Committee (BIPAC). “I was impressed by the thoughtful preparation of the BIPAC student organizers, the attendance of some 35 or 40 students, and the openness of the students to hear perspectives on issues of identity in Israel and the experiences of the Arab minority most had not previously engaged,” says Cohen.

Similarly, students and faculty in two Hebrew classes invited Farhat to share with them, in Hebrew, reflections on his work as a dialogue facilitator and his perspective on living in Israel as a Palestinian. Many had never heard of Seeds of Peace or similar programs. “I find it heartening that members of the Brandeis community are willing to engage with perspectives that are likely to challenge their own,” says Cohen.

Agbaria and Cohen also co-facilitated weekend workshops, “Facilitating Encounters Through Art,” which explored the relationship between dialogue and art. The sessions were designed for artists, cultural workers and leaders of cultural institutions who work or plan to work in zones of violent conflict around the world – including the United States – and welcomed several Brandeis undergraduate students who are exploring the role of arts in peacebuilding.

Farhat Agbaria’s residency was cosponsored by the Interfaith Chaplaincy; the Master’s Program in Coexistence and Conflict; the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences; the Peace, Conflict and Coexistence Studies Program; the Student Senate and the Theater Arts Department.

The exhibit-related events concluded with “Exposures: Photography and the Politics of Looking,” which brought the artist Dor Guez himself to the Rose for a series of discussions on the photographic image and its resonance with politics. Guez was joined by Cohen; Dabney Hailey, director of academic programs at the Rose Art Museum; Catherine Cissé van den Muijsenbergh, executive director of the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation; and Ilan Troen, director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies.

“The act of looking,” said Hailey during a panel discussion, is “the space for possibility for me: for the conversation to turn, for people to hear one another, for lives to be changed, for knowledge to be gained.”

Cissé van den Muijsenbergh, an expert in international criminal justice and human rights law, also delivered a lecture, “Zoom In – Narratives and Photography in Zones of Conflict.” She focused on her work with a project called “Zoom In,” which looks at how young Israelis and Palestinians interpret photographs from 1948 when the images are presented first without context.

“We bring together opposite sides,” she said, “with the objective to achieve what we call ‘shared narratives’.... It is not to agree on everything – which is just impossible.... It’s about bringing out all the interpretations and all the identities at stake around a single event.”

Contrasting his role as an artist to the scholarly work of Cissé van den Muijsenbergh in “Zoom In,” Guez explained that “I can say ‘this is my story, this is my narrative, this is my truth.’ I don’t give the audience much space for its own interpretation of the narrative, but I do give them a lot of space to think about their own narrative and the way they think about themselves.”

For more about the exhibit and related events, including video of the “Exposures” conversation and of a talk by Farhat Agbaria, go to: brandeis.edu/ethics/news/2012/2012. December.10.html.
National Cohesion in Insecure States: Experiences from Africa

Mistrust, rivalries, and manipulation of the legacies of the past are among the hurdles societies face after conflict on the way to national cohesion and peace. How can we pursue sustainable and ecologically responsible development in a globalized and exposed puzzle of nations, networks and interests?

There seems to be a paradox in national cohesion. In the context of insecurity, national cohesion can be seen as the threat by those within the society who have adopted a mindset of zero-sum game, where mistrust prevails and there are clashes of legitimacy....

One of the challenges for the actors is the duty to exert some self-restraint. ...We all hear the news about Congo. Under the current circumstances, it is probably incumbent on the Rwandan state to think on a daily basis whether to exert self-restraint or not in the face of an insecure neighbor: it has been a question for the past 15 years, if not more.

Recently I’ve decided to start ILC [Initiative pour un Leadership Cohésif / Initiative for a Cohesive Leadership] workshops in Congo with this small sentence, because there are a lot of traffic jams in Kinshasa: “We are not in the traffic jam; we are the traffic jam.” It helps us concentrate on us and our own responsibilities, in so many facets of the issues we have to deal with. We are part of the problem and the solution.

...What are the steps forward when we see these stages of intergenerational, social, and absolute (physical) insecurity? In my view it’s all about national, local leadership. The elites no more hiding behind external actors or external culprits. It’s more visible today than it was before the Arab Spring, perhaps. But more than ever it is a reality that it’s all about national ownership and responsibility.

It’s also about allowing every stakeholder, including those who have no voice – the Pigmy community in Congo, the women, the young actors – to express their respective grievances, their fears and their suspicions – and to be listened to by key decision makers at the national level.

It’s also about pressing the ‘reset button’ about the sources and authors of exploitation and alienation. It’s as if the population should start to say, “Let’s watch, check, and sometimes sanction our leaders, first and foremost, before trying to look to the rest of the world for the origins of my problem.” In a sense, it’s a form of a new national liberation, when we watch our own leadership.

---

The overarching goal to get to national cohesion is for any leadership to be seen as taking the driver’s seat – and to be tested in that role, and to accept being tested – after decades of alienation, especially in a place like Congo.
Learning from the Past: The Judicial Philosophy of Louis Brandeis

Following the pivotal 1912 national U.S. elections, new progressive voices helped Americans embrace a modern future, defining a pragmatic middle path between rural populists and urban finance capitalists. Among those emerging voices was that of Louis Dembitz Brandeis, raised in the state of Kentucky after the Civil War by European parents, and based in Boston as a public-interest lawyer with national recognition. ...

Brandeis understood that courts were surrounded by politics, and could not — should not — evade that connection. Drawing on his entire career as a policy reformer, Brandeis thought it was not enough for courts to declare broad human rights; they had to work actively to build political capacities at the lower jurisdictional levels. As the author of the two greatest civil liberties decisions in American law (Whitney v. California and Olmstead v. United States), Brandeis gave lyrical expression to the importance of legal rights as the condition for human expression. In his judicial philosophy, the challenge was to enable such conditions to flourish for all peoples, in all corners of the nation.

Law and Justice at Brandeis University: The Legacy of Louis Brandeis

Brandeis University has established a wide array of law and justice programs, both on campus and off campus, that reflect the spirit of its namesake, Supreme Court Associate Justice Louis D. Brandeis. Many Brandeis alums go on to study and practice law, and to advocate for social justice in the United States and around the world. More about law and justice at Brandeis: brandeis.edu/ethics/internationaljustice/LawatBrandeis.html

COMING NEXT SUMMER:
The next Brandeis Institute for International Judges will be held in July 2013 in Sweden, in partnership with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and the Lund University Faculty of Law. For updates: brandeis.edu/ethics/internationaljustice/biji

With partisan deadlocks in the American political system — and in more violent conflicts in other parts of the world — compromise is all the rage. Principle never looked so bad. Some so-called leaders have dug into positions so hardened that they are willing to sink the ship of state rather than compromise on core beliefs.

But perhaps the issue is less a matter of principle and more a matter of trust. Compromise got a bad name from Neville Chamberlain, who misplaced his trust in Adolf Hitler. But the reasonable skepticism that Chamberlain’s example might engender has ballooned into a consuming and paralyzing fear of the ultimate betrayal.

What we need in our politics — nationally and globally — is not more men and women willing to cut corners on their beliefs. We need leaders who make every effort to seek, understand and approach others with whom they disagree but in whom they find some common commitment to the public good.

This means making crucial distinctions between unbending architects of evil and opponents with a sense of humanity. Among Nelson Mandela’s overlooked virtues is that he is a man of principle who made that distinction. At a critical point in South African history Mandela found a way to trust even those who stood at the apex of the machinery of apartheid.

The solitary individual who stands firm against evil is lionized as a hero, while the practical visionary of the collective good is vilified as weak and naïve. Spielberg’s portrayal of Stevens is a start at correcting this, prodding us through the discomfort of its example — perhaps deliberately — to take stock of the real costs of absolute fidelity. It is a reminder that our most effective actions are not solitary but collective. Principle unfolds in human interaction.
Ethics Center: Now on YouTube!

The Ethics Center launched a YouTube channel this fall, featuring newly-produced short videos created by Ethics Center Leadership Council members Jordan Birnbaum ’13, Hailey Magee ’15, and Aditya Sanyal ’13. These videos feature members of the Ethics Center’s International Advisory Board, as well as discussions from recent Ethics Center events. Also available for viewing are full videos of Ethics Center events.

Watch them all here: youtube.com/EthicsBrandeis

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

“Playback Theatre & Desert Roots: Journey of an Iranian Immigrant Family” featured readings from Prof. Mitra Shavarini’s new memoir Desert Roots, an original song performed by Leila May Pascual ’15 and a professional Playback Theatre performance featuring Brandeis alumni Will Chalmus ’07, Nathan Porteshawver ’09, Etta King ’10 and others.

Expert dialogue facilitator Farhat Agbaria, based at Givat Haviva in Israel and Seeds of Peace, was in residence at Brandeis (see page 1).

At the third annual “Year Abroad, Queer Abroad” a panel of Brandeis students spoke about their study abroad experiences. (Sponsored by Triskelion.)

At “Exposures: Photography and the Politics of Looking” artist Dor Guez, featured at the Rose Art Museum, discussed the photographic image and its resonance with politics. He was joined by Executive Director of the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation Catherine Cissé van den Muijsenbergh and Brandeis faculty (see page 1).

NOVEMBER

A screening of the documentary “Ai Wei Wei: Never Sorry” was followed by a Q&A with the film’s director, Alison Klayman. (Sponsored by the Film, Television and Interactive Media Program.)

Director Jacob Bender discussed his film “Out of Cordoba: Averroes and Maimonides in Their Time and Ours,” about coexistence between Jews and Muslims in medieval Spain, at a screening sponsored by the Master’s Program in Coexistence and Conflict.

The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, with the Graduate School Council and the undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences convened “Intersectionality: Innovations in Research and Policy,” a workshop featuring Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, Professor of Law at UCLA and Columbia Law School and leading thinker of Critical Race Theory.

At “Thank Who? Reflections on the Meaning and Mythology of Thanksgiving” educator, activist, member of the Arawak Nation and facilitator on Native history and communities Claudia Fox Tree explored Americans’ relationships with Native America.

OCTOBER

Michel Noureddine Kassa, Country Team Leader for the Initiative for a Cohesive Leadership in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was the Center’s sixth Distinguished Visiting Practitioner (see page 5).

Colombian indigenous leader Ligna Pulido spoke about “Violence, Militarization, Indigenous Peoples and International Trade.” (Sponsored by Programs in Sustainable International Development at the Heller School.)

DECEMBER

Tracing Roots: Uncovering Realities Beneath the Surface

The 2012 Sorenson Fellows presented their experiences with internships that spanned the globe, grappling with political conflict, religious tolerance, the arts and coexistence, the legacy of genocide, and environmental and economic development. For videos and more: brandeis.edu/ethics/atbrandeis/sorensonfellowship/bios2012.html

Interested in Ethics Center Cosponsorship? See: brandeis.edu/ethics/events/cosponsorship
Beyond Nuremberg: The Future of International Criminal Justice

**January 30, 2013, 5:30 pm**
International Lounge, Usdan Student Center, Brandeis University

Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the U.N., Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al-Hussein will reflect on the development of international criminal justice and the challenges faced by tribunals in leading those convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes to acknowledge and repent of their crimes. Moderated by Donald Ferencz of the Planethood Foundation.

Free and open to the public. Funded by the Planethood Foundation. Co-sponsored by the Legal Studies, International & Global Studies and Peace, Conflict & Coexistence Departments; and the Heller School’s Coexistence and Conflict Program.

Details: brandeis.edu/ethics/events

’DEIS Impact! Exploring Social Justice on Campus, in Waltham & Around the World

**February 1-11 2013**
Brandeis University Campus

The Ethics Center and the Student Union present the second annual weeklong “festival of social justice” at Brandeis. Featuring dozens of events by individuals, departments and clubs – talks, performances, exhibits, discussions and more!

Keynote Address: “Uganda by Way of Hollywood & Boston: a Social Justice Journey” – Film and TV star Eliza Dushku and her mother Judy Dushku, professor of politics at Suffolk University, will speak about their work with THRIVE-Gulu, which addresses issues of child soldiers, sex slavery and other post-conflict concerns in Uganda. Free and open to the public. Ticket info and full schedule: go.brandeis.edu/DEISimpact

Brazil’s Balancing Act: Reconciling the Demands of Economic Development, Environmental Protection and Indigenous Rights

**March 5, 2013, 2-5 pm**
International Lounge, Usdan Student Center, Brandeis University

Experts working in diverse fields – including economic development, international business, environmental protection, international law, human rights and indigenous rights – will examine the intersecting interests and responsibilities of those working in at times conflicting sectors. The symposium will provide a forum for dialogue about how Brazil might best fulfill its local, national and international obligations.

Free and open to the public. Organized by the Ethics Center and the International Business School of Brandeis University. For more information, see brandeis.edu/ethics/events

**View short films and full events on the Center’s new YouTube channel:** youtube.com/EthicsBrandeis – see page 7 for details