February 7 – 11, 2005

A week exploring the interplay of local action and global change
Local Action/Global Impact

An Interactive Forum

A week exploring the interplay of local action and global change

Sponsored by the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life in collaboration with organizations and departments across Brandeis University.

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Brandeis University
February 7-11, 2005
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Like light through a lens, the Brandeis community came together in early 2005 to focus on issues of the interplay of local and global social action — with some surprising results. From February 7 to 11, the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life convened an extended interactive forum called Local Action/Global Impact. The Forum was designed to examine the various mechanisms through which social change takes place, and to find out what could be achieved if many parts of the Brandeis community focused their energy for change in a new way.

The Forum was a true community event. Twenty-seven campus departments and student organizations helped organize the presentations. Speakers included undergraduate and graduate students, custodial staff and senior faculty members, atheists and ministers, activists and CEOs, artists and generals. More than 650 people joined the various events.

This publication describes the spectrum of ideas that emerged during a week of presentation, conversation, dialogue and performance. The heart of the text is a series of contributions from Brandeis students who participated in the event and then reflected on it as part of their work in two undergraduate courses. We hope that the Forum and this record of its ideas will serve to inspire Brandeis students and the larger community to continue to engage in passionate debate about the variety of ways that people can work together to change the world.
Introduction: Ripples of Hope

Because Brandeis University prides itself on its commitment to social justice, the calendar is always filled with interesting events examining issues of worldwide import, planned by students as well as faculty and staff. “How can I really make a difference in this challenging world?” is a question asked not only by politics and sociology students, but also economics and art majors at Brandeis.

That question is not simply a theoretical construct but a daily dilemma. Faced with pressing needs in our own campus town as well as horrific world problems, one might wonder whether to tutor an immigrant child in the elementary school down the street or demonstrate at City Hall Plaza against the education policy that makes tutoring a necessity for many immigrant children. Or is there a way to do both — to leverage a small local action to stimulate broader change?

Local Action/Global Impact was convened to shed light on that question. Fourteen sessions, sponsored by 27 campus departments and student organizations, drew an estimated 650 participants representing a large cross-section of campus. Even beyond the Forum itself, it was clear from campus conversations that people were thinking about and grappling with these issues — in and out of the talks and workshops, in and out of the classroom.

The inquiry began even before the Forum. The book selected for the incoming first-year students to read over the summer, Mountains beyond Mountains, written by Tracy Kidder, is a fascinating illustration of these themes. How did Paul Farmer walk miles to visit a single patient in rural Haiti and change AIDS policy worldwide? How did he take his local action in a single clinic in Haiti and leverage it to revolutionize health care delivery systems internationally? Kidder, speaking to the first-year students when they arrived in late August, began to illuminate one avenue for expanding local action into global impact: “By learning to treat a patient, you learn to treat a family, then a village, then a nation, then the world.”

During the Forum itself, Brandeis faculty and staff welcomed guests from nonprofit organizations and government agencies — and in some cases, welcomed back alumni — to act as speakers and moderators at the 14 sessions.

Two of the alumni panelists formed an interesting pair: Deborah Bial ’87, founder of the Posse Foundation, and George Okrah ’03, Posse alumnus. Bial founded Posse Foundation when one of the many bright students from New York City returned home after a few months of college, saying, “If I had my posse with me, I would’ve never dropped out of college.” The Posse Program sends a team of 10 student leaders to college from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds to support one another and change campus culture. Okrah represents one of the products of that investment as a Brandeis alumnus who is working for two years in New Orleans, one of the poorest school systems in the country. The encouragement Okrah received will flow on as he likewise inspires other students in his own classroom.

Brandeis students did not have to wait long for a chance at hands-on participation in the sessions. On just the second day, several dined at a “Hunger Banquet,” in which one’s dinner depended upon his/her randomly assigned socio-economic group in a microcosm of the dinner plates around the world that night. The majority received rice and water, some received rice and beans, but only the smallest percentage had what Brandeisians considered a full meal — pasta, garlic bread, salad and dessert.

While one session addressed hunger on an individual level, another addressed poverty on a more global scale. Adam Neiman, CEO of Waltham-based clothing manufacturer Bienestar International, described his union-friendly approach to business in a session entitled “Globalize This: A Waltham Alternative to Sweatshops.” Bienestar outsources its labor only to union shops that offer workers decent wages, good conditions and a voice in how the shops are run. The result is a workforce with higher productivity and a higher standard of living — and a company growth of 750 percent in the past year — proving that a business can thrive while still supporting its workers as human beings.

This is not a call to heroics, or a call for you to change your life plans. Small acts - discussions with a neighbor, a letter to the editor, every form of everyday civic participation - can accomplish great things.

— Massachusetts Supreme Court Chief Justice Margaret Marshall at Brandeis commencement, 5/22/05
The Forum encouraged attendees to look at problems not just from a global point-of-view but from a historical perspective as well. David Dennis, a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, compared his Civil Rights battles of the 1960s to his work in education today, saying poor students are being “tracked out” of a successful future. “They’re being told early that algebra is not for them, just as sharecroppers and black people were told voting was not for them.” Without a solid background in algebra, explained Dennis, low-income students are shunted out of the college preparation track and trained for low-paying careers, perpetuating the cycle. Dennis and Robert Moses, co-author of Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project, founded the Algebra Project to address this inequity. Through practical, hands-on experiences, the Algebra Project works with students and mobilizes community support for empowering youth in their struggle for equal rights.

The Forum also fostered relationships between groups that don’t ordinarily work together. A marvelously successful event, “Brandeis Activism and Service: Separate, United or Both?” attracted volunteers and activists from what could be called the opposite ends of the local/global spectrum. The email advertising the event illustrated the tensions that can sometimes arise between those who do hands-on service and those who work for causes through public advocacy and political means:

“All activists do is talk...”
“I don’t understand why they volunteer; there’s so many bigger problems in the world...”

Does this sound familiar? Want to figure out how we can all work together? Join Students for a Just Society and the Waltham Group for a discussion of how we can bridge our perceived barriers and work for social change.

Even the very action of careful planning for the activism and service event brought together representatives of these two campus groups. Internationally renowned practitioner (now Brandeis professor) Mari Fitzduff facilitated the session using techniques honed in her coexistence work worldwide as well as in her native Northern Ireland. The session brought the participants to a new level of appreciation for both local and global work and a better understanding of ways they can work together.

Another unexpected collaboration arose between Brit Tzdek v’Shalom and Zionists for Historical Veracity, two of the campus clubs that focus on Israel. The left-leaning BTvS and the right-wing ZaHaV rarely find themselves cosponsoring events. But the session entitled “Wherever We Stand” refers to the international Hillel slogan: “Wherever we stand, we stand with Israel.” Representatives from BTvS and ZaHaV came together to mount the session, with surprising results. Josh Rosenthal ’07 of BTvS described the session:

“As much as I thought we might spark dialogue, I had pessimistically expected the event to be the usual right vs. left back-and-forth with both sides talking past each other. Instead, the speakers focused on the question of how politicized Israel advocacy should be, an issue that cuts across party lines. I found myself on the same side as some of the ZaHaV-niks with regard to Israel, which doesn’t seem to happen a lot. We both agreed that political ends should be used to end the conflict. We also got to flesh out some real issues of why we do what we do around Israel, without getting caught in partisan bickering. (There was discussion about whether partisan bickering was a bad thing, however.)”

Closer to home, the session “El Salvador to Brandeis: The Search for Work, Wages, and Justice” was a key milestone in a major activist effort on campus and featured perhaps the most unlikely pairing of panelists of the entire Forum. Organized by the student group Brandeis Labor Coalition (BLC), the session featured a panel of three Brandeis custodial workers from Central America and two professors. The custodians, speaking with student translators, told of the conditions in their homeland that led them to the United States: civil war, domestic violence and poverty-level wages. “You come to this country thinking that it is a dream and that your life is going to be a lot better, but it’s not true,” said one of the workers. BLC is organizing on behalf of the 25
percent of the custodians who are employed by an outside contractor, Hurley of America, at much lower wages and fewer benefits than Brandeis custodians. “[The custodians] say the Brandeis Labor Coalition gives them a voice that the administration can hear,” read an article appearing the next day in the Boston Globe.

Six months later, BLC saw that its appeal had not gone unnoticed. On August 8, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Peter B. French announced that the University agreed to a new five-year contract with Service Employees International Union Local 615, the union representing custodial workers on campus. As part of that contract, the positions that were contracted out will become staff positions on August 1, 2006; in the interim, all contract custodians working at Brandeis will receive the same wage rate as Brandeis-employed custodians, retroactive to July 1, 2005.

“This agreement is another important milestone in the University’s ongoing efforts to improve wages and benefits for those who work at Brandeis,” said French. “We take seriously our responsibility, rooted in the University’s foundational pillar of social justice, to offer competitive and equitable wages.”

“We got us all that we were fighting for!” said Erin Hull ‘05, a member of BLC and the coordinator of the session, in response to the announcement. “So much of that was due to our event, and I thank you for the chance to do that.”

But the labor activist effort was not the only concrete action that resulted from the Forum. To channel the energy stirred up by the Local/Global Forum, students produced a “What’s Next?” brochure, with suggestions of concrete ways to make an impact with 10 minutes, an hour, a day, or a summer (see page 35). A mural dubbed “Art Attack” also captured learnings from the week and was on display after the Forum in the atrium downstairs from the Ethics Center.

The questions that formed the themes of Local Action/Global Impact are complex, without easy answers. But the inquiry yielded several suggestions for thinking about how excellent local action can expand to stimulate broader change:

**An investment in an individual change agent.** Brandeis alumna Deb Bial founded the Posse Program that changed the life of alumnus George Okrah, who is changing the lives of younger students in Teach for America. Who knows whether one child in his classroom, inspired by his example, may become the next Nelson Mandela and revolutionize the world? Or perhaps s/he will be the next George Okrah, changing the lives of others in an ever-widening circle.

**A model for others.** Many thought it was impossible—a manufacturing company that pays union wages, not sweatshop wages, to its employees and still turns a profit. Bienestar International is showing the world how it can be done.

**A watershed experience.** One meal of rice and beans may drive home the point of world hunger in a very personal way, leaving a roomful of people with an awareness and an impetus to get involved.

**An individual that represents a larger problem.** David Dennis and Robert Moses didn’t set out to empower low-income youth by improving math education across the country. But when Moses’ daughter wasn’t learning algebra, Moses and Dennis realized it was a danger sign of narrowing opportunities for her and took action. After finding that it wasn’t just in one household but was in fact representative of a larger problem, they tackled that larger problem and changed much more than one young girl’s education.

**A megaphone.** Like the Brandeis Labor Coalition, a few individuals can amplify the stories of those who have no voice, so that they can be heard by a college administration and the 2.4 million readers of the Boston Globe.

From the results of the Forum, it seems clear that there are many ways in which large-scale social service and focused local action can both bring about change in the larger world. But how do individuals and organizations decide which route to take? With so many issues of importance across the globe – and so many avenues for providing aid – it can be difficult to know where to begin. In the session entitled “Faith In Action: From Brandeis to Nicaragua, From Boston to Sudan,” Ray Hammond, from the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Jamaica Plain, Mass., recommended using the “three C’s” to find one’s
way and keep from feeling overwhelmed: “Convictions, community and circumstances often help you to decide on your calling in this huge ocean of need.” (See page 10 for the full text.)

The famous quote by Sen. Robert F. Kennedy during his 1966 speech to South African students—the source of the phrase “the ripple effect”—effectively sums up the mission behind the Local Action/Global Impact Forum:

“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

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NOTES
1 “Brandeis students giving immigrant workers a voice,” by Stephanie V. Sick, The Boston Globe, February 17, 2005
Reactions and Reflections

First Step: Personal Local/Global Choices
Cosponsored by the Future Alumni of Brandeis, Posse Plus, the Student Union Diversity Committee and Student Enrichment Services

Deborah Bial ’87, Posse Foundation • Ronnie Levin ’73, Environmental Protection Agency • George Okrah ’03, Teach for America

Graduate student Brian Bisceglia-Kane and Caitlin Steitzer ’05 contributed to this article.

Brandeis alumni from the past three decades spoke about personal choices for local and/or global career paths and how they have amplified local action for broader impact.

“In my opinion, there are too few people who are doing good work who are really powerful leaders.” - Deborah Bial ’87

“The first thing to do is to feel responsible for a problem so you can help solve it. Brandeis is just big enough, just small enough, just radical enough, just straight enough, just good enough, just bad enough for lots of things to happen. Look around you and see what needs changing. You start with very small things and see how they can expand.” - Ronnie Levin ’73

“That first day of teaching, I was so nervous. The only thing in the back of my head was ‘These kids are dependent on you, not for a lunch ticket, not for anything else, but their education. This is what’s going to make or break them forever.’” - George Okrah ’03

Deborah Bial ’87, founder of the Posse Foundation, joined Ronnie Levin ’73 and George Okrah ’03 to speak about their personal experiences trying to make a difference locally and amplifying that work to have a more global impact. Panelists detailed their career paths, explaining how their hopes and dreams have directed them into their current occupations. Bial continues her work with the Posse Foundation, while Levin works for the Environmental Protection Agency, and Okrah is in his second year teaching in the Teach For America program.

Each panelist has chosen a different path by which to work towards societal change. Okrah’s approach to change is at the individual level, helping children overcome some of the cumbersome barriers they face in acquiring an education. Bial works for change at the organizational level, helping underprivileged youth leaders attain a college degree while simultaneously transforming their college campuses through their leadership skills. Lastly, Levin approaches social change at the societal level by working with the EPA, improving society through policy reform.

Okrah spoke about his experience as an undergraduate intern as an Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellow, a program of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life. Working in Guatemala, a country devastated by a 37-year-old civil war, he observed the struggle for existence more than the struggle towards coexistence. Later, as a Brandeis graduate, he began his two-year commitment to Teach for America teaching sixth grade in a poor neighborhood just outside New Orleans. In his first week, a boy in his class was shot and killed when “a drug bust went bad.”

In his first days as a teacher, Okrah remembered feeling desperate and powerless in the classroom. Most of his problems teaching stemmed not from the students’ lack of comprehension of the information, but from the students’ lack of motivation to learn. In the face of overwhelming responsibilities to work and/or take care of younger siblings, many of his students find it difficult to dedicate time and attention to their education. Okrah realized his students’ potential and knew that in order to educate them he must somehow motivate them to learn. Now, every time

“Like the speakers, I feel a need to connect and help my community and the world around me. Yet, as I come out of college, I am at a loss as to how. Should I concentrate on creating impacts on a large scale? Should I aim to fix “the system” and eradicate major injustices, or should I focus on problems where I will see immediate change?”

– Caitlin Steitzer ’05

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Okrah is successful in getting through to his students and helping them to fulfill their potential, it reminds him why he enjoys teaching. While his job is very demanding and difficult to manage at times, it is also extremely rewarding.

Bial started the Posse Foundation in 1989 to empower underprivileged youth to support one another as a team in order to achieve a college education. The genesis of the Posse program came after one bright young student floundered in college and eventually dropped out because he lacked peer support. The method of the Posse Foundation is to select student leaders from public high schools in the heart of New York City to form multicultural teams called “posses.” These teams are then prepared, through an intensive eight-month pre-college training program, for enrollment at top universities nationwide on full scholarship. As a “posse,” members help each other through their college careers and eventually receive their degree together – while simultaneously serving as leaders in the community and transforming the campus climate. This educated cohort can then enter the job market and give back to the community by making a positive impact. Over the past 14 years, Posse has placed 721 students into colleges and universities (including Okrah, a Posse alumnus). These students have a college graduation rate close to 90 percent, higher than the national average and far higher than their peers in their home neighborhoods.

Environmental activist Levin is making change through social policy. Although she studied Bible and liturgy at Brandeis, she has worked for 25 years as an agent of the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA strives to improve the environment through policy changes, which in turn will make a positive impact for everyone in society. Levin has worked on some of the most important legislation of the last century – including reducing lead levels in gasoline by 90 percent and reducing the allowable lead in drinking water. The EPA believes that improving the environment will have long-lasting benefits for society and future generations. Levin pointed out that one must own the problem one works to eliminate. As long as one continues to blame other people or circumstances, the problem remains unsolved, because one can’t fix someone else’s problem. But when one takes responsibility for the problem, one can begin to make change.

The members of this panel themselves are an interesting example of the “ripple effect.” Bial, founder of the Posse Foundation, gave Okrah the opportunity to go to college. Attending Brandeis, Okrah was inspired to learn about social justice and decided to work in Teach for America. He now works to help other students from difficult backgrounds realize their full potential – and the ripple effect goes on.
Oxfam Hunger Banquet
Cosponsored by Aramark and the Department of Orientation and First-Year Programs

Though written in the first person, this article encompasses the collective ideas and feelings of Ari Fleisher ’07, Jaclyn Haar ’07, Sara Russell ’07 and Allie Winer ’08, each of whom participated in the Oxfam Hunger Banquet.

What if you attended a dinner party that was like dinner worldwide that night? That is, what if 15 percent of the people who came to the dinner ate a full course meal, 25 percent ate rice and beans, and 60 percent had only rice and water? The result would be the Oxfam Hunger Banquet.

According to one participant who was lucky enough to be in the wealthiest group, “Good food never tasted so bad.”

I walked up to the door and was handed a blue slip of paper. It described the circumstances of 20-year-old Mercedes who lived in a small town in Ecuador, but all that caught my eye was the capitalized, bold label, “Middle-Income.” I later learned that 25 percent of the world’s population fits into this category, living on the border of security and poverty. Silently relieved, I was directed towards a row of plastic chairs on the far side of the room. On my way, I walked through a cluster of several round tables covered with white tablecloths. In retrospect, I can even picture a bouquet of flowers at the center of each table. It must have been the brilliance of the tablecloths against the bleak gray carpet that caused my twinge of jealousy towards the high-income group and their excessive luxury. These individuals signified 15 percent of the world’s population, people who enjoy a secure future and a high level of access in society.

Moving towards my designated place, I almost tripped over a backpack in the middle of the floor. I saw that there was a large group of people seated on the ground. At the banquet, this remaining group represented the 60 percent of the world’s population that struggles to survive every day.

By attending the Oxfam Hunger Banquet, I realized the relativity of social status. Before dinner, several individuals were singled out to receive promotions or demotions in their professions, which immediately affected their socioeconomic positions. As one member of the high-income group was promoted due to a company merger, I was fired from my job. Consequently, I was asked to leave my chair and sit on the floor with the low-income participants. Once we collected our food, my low-income friends and I self-consciously laughed as we licked grains of rice off of our plates or hand-fed ourselves. I looked over at the high-income table, where one student avoided my eye contact as she hesitantly picked at her pasta and garlic bread. My mouth watered, and I could not help but feel slighted.

The food distribution problem in the world has never been more personal than when I experienced its implications firsthand. The irony of Oxfam’s simulation at Brandeis is that most participants will attain comfort and security in their lives. The issue of world hunger is not one of my daily concerns, but the Hunger Banquet forced me to explore the hardships that many people experience. While there is no simple solution to world hunger, Oxfam America uses a small-scale representation to increase awareness locally, thus furthering the motivation for global change.

If you don’t like the way the world is, you change it. You have an obligation to change it. You just do it one step at a time.

— Marian Wright Edelman

During the Oxfam Hunger Banquet, participants were placed into different socio-economic groups and given food accordingly. The majority received rice and water, and only the smallest percentage had a full meal.
Radical Equations: Civil Rights and the Algebra Project
COSPONSORED BY THE EDUCATION PROGRAM

David Dennis, the Algebra Project

Vera Bagnyuk ’07, Lauren Schneider ’07 and Amanda Singer ’07 contributed to this article.

David Dennis, president of the Southern Initiative of the Algebra Project and former member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, discussed the ways in which mathematical skills help low-income students succeed in today’s technology-oriented society, empowering youth in the struggle for citizenship and equality.

“Teaching algebra is a political issue for civil rights. Algebra is always used to select leaders. Algebra is where students learn creative thinking skills that take them beyond math. But today’s low-income students are being told algebra is not for them.” – David Dennis

In his foreword to the book Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project, David Dennis recalls a conversation with co-author Robert Moses in which Moses compared eighth-graders in the 1980s to sharecroppers in the 1960s, saying some kids were being “tracked out” of first-class citizenship.

“They’re being told early that algebra is not for them,” explains Dennis, “just as sharecroppers and Black people were told voting was not for them.”

Dennis would know. Formerly the Mississippi director for the Congress of Racial Equality, he participated in the first freedom bus ride in 1961 from Montgomery, Alabama, to Jackson, Mississippi. He sees the Algebra Project as a continuation of the Civil Rights struggle, giving youth the mathematical skills necessary to succeed in the ongoing struggle for equality. Bob Moses, Dennis’ friend and co-leader in the Civil Rights movement, founded the Algebra Project in 1982 out of a concern that his daughter was not getting a good mathematical education because her school did not teach algebra to eighth-graders. Since then, the Algebra Project has spread to 19 states across the country and has given thousands of students access to higher education to help them succeed in today’s technology-laden society.

The goal of the Algebra Project is for every student in the public school system, regardless of race, class or color, to have access to a first-class education. In many places around the country, poor students (mainly from racial minorities) are not receiving the same level of education as the richer students (predominantly white). The leaders of the Algebra Project understand the hardships facing the members of many poor communities. By implementing this program in the schools they hope to improve the education that every student receives and close the gap particularly between white and non-white education.

Algebra is the key. In middle school, students are either tracked into algebra (which leads to college preparatory coursework) or tracked out. While algebra is a “gatekeeper” course that induces creative problem-solving skills, it also frightens and turns away public school students and parents alike. Many children and their parents do not think that they can “do math” or “do algebra.”

By teaching practical applications of mathematical concepts, the Algebra Project allows students to understand the relevance of algebra in their lives. In order to make the reasoning behind certain mathematical procedures clear, the teachers arrange for students to go on trips and do activities that bring these concepts to life. For example, when studying integers, students go on a subway trip that includes eight stops (outbound and inbound) and are given a chance to conceptualize what constitutes a negative integer and what constitutes a positive integer.

Teacher training and community organization are two key components to the success of the Algebra Project. Teacher training is necessary so the teachers learn not only how to teach algebra to their students but also how

“I am only one. But still I am one. I cannot do everything. But I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”

– Edward Everett Hale
to demystify it. The teachers show their students that algebra is not as hard as most adults and children think it is. Dennis showed how we’ve been using algebraic concepts since we were in first grade. When you’re in first grade you are given “3+____=5” and asked to fill in the blank. In algebra, a variable replaces the blank, as in “3+y=5.” For some reason, many people find the second example more daunting than the first.

Community organizing is important because the community needs to be the agent of change. Parent nights demonstrate the classroom work and generate discussions among all the parents to show them that algebra is not as difficult as they might think it is. Once the parents understand this, they can help their children with their work and motivation. A program such as the Algebra Project is nothing without the community in which it operates and the people that are a part of it. Pioneers such as David Dennis can only go so far by implementing such a project in the schools; the teachers, parents and other members of the community must be willing to help it grow from there. Without the strength and organization of communities, the Algebra Project will never succeed.

By addressing individual needs, we can eventually transform the lives of millions. The Algebra Project started with one man’s concern for his daughter, and it has grown to help thousands across the country learn algebra and succeed in life, thereby becoming change agents among their peers and models for the next generation as well.
How can small-scale actions spark large-scale change? What impact, foreseen or unforeseen, can larger initiatives have on local efforts?

“One person doing one thing that is quite personal can make a huge difference.” - Joan Bryant

“How can we leverage small, inspiring innovations to make larger change? We must see government as the catalyst for community change, with citizens at the center of the work.” - Carmen Sirianni

“Action needs to be grounded in the community, where the people have ownership and are moving in a common direction. It is important to be in the same book, if not on the same page.” - David Dennis

“Each speaker has stressed the importance of imagination and innovation, creating a vision of the future that can best bring people together and maximize their leverage on institutions and structures.” - Dan Kryder

The session “Social Change from Theory to Practice” emphasized that global change starts with only a seed of well-rooted local action; and from this seed a larger social change can grow, perhaps even on the global level after it creates strong roots. Brandeis professors Joan Bryant and Carmen Sirianni, and David Dennis of the Algebra Project, all spoke about their experiences with activist movements, with Professor Dan Kryder as moderator. Each addressed the ways in which people can campaign and lobby for equal rights in many venues.

Bryant, a professor of African and Afro-American Studies, discussed the fact that the Civil Rights movement was not a coordinated movement at all but was comprised of many local organizations that shared a “political kinship.” Although the individual groups were not specifically organizing and working together on a global level, their kinship allowed their collective local efforts to have a sense of connectedness. Bryant introduced the Emmett Till case as an example of local action translating into a globally acknowledged issue. Till was a black 14-year-old boy from Chicago visiting relatives in Mississippi in August 1955. He was brutally murdered for allegedly whistling at a white woman, the owner of a supermarket where he went to buy bubblegum. When his decomposed body was retrieved from a river after three days, people expected a closed casket funeral. Instead, his mother chose to have an open casket, showing graphically the actual results of the terrible treatment of blacks, particularly in the South. Thousands of people waited in line in Chicago to see his brutally beaten body; photos were published worldwide. The two white men

When looking to make a social change and have a global impact, it is not necessary for people to have lots of money, power or connections; rather, it is important for a person to be able to look into one’s own community, find the problem and start from there to better society.

–Serena Gober ’07
accused of kidnapping and killing him were acquitted by a Mississippi jury made up entirely of white men. Till’s mother’s act of courage in having an open casket funeral for her murdered son transformed this spectacle of terror into an indictment, and became a major catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement. Bryant noted, “One person doing one thing that is quite personal can make a huge difference.”

Sirianni, a sociology professor, chose to discuss a variety of actions that are taking place in communities now and the ways in which they differ from movements of the past. Communities are beginning to look internally at their own assets instead of seeking assistance from outside, thereby capitalizing on their strengths rather than focusing on their deficits. Sirianni also discussed the importance of social capital and the “democracy that engages citizens.” He believes that change will ensure if there is a developed sense of democratic values and if there is a profoundly shaped identity.

Dennis, whose Algebra Project teaches math to less-privileged children, used his personal experiences in the Civil Rights Movement to convey his feelings about activism. After growing up on a plantation in the south, he became an active participant in the Civil Rights Movement. He organized and participated in sit-ins, boycotts and other local actions that sparked global reaction, including the first Freedom Bus Ride from Alabama to Mississippi in 1961, and the Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964. Dennis focused on the ways in which certain local movements have been able to capture the imagination of the nation and the world, and thus bring about a global response. He used the examples of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott. Neither of these events were the first of their kind, but there was something about these specific actions that was able to gain attention and bring about action. Dennis continues his Civil Rights work today with the Algebra Project, which has been described in various articles, including “We Shall Overcome, This Time with Algebra”1 and “Mississippi Learning: Algebra is a Political Curriculum in a Bob Moses Project.”2 (Read more about the Algebra Project on page 15.)

When addressing issues that could have a global impact, there is a need to start small and create a strong base of local action in one’s own community before moving it to a larger-scale project. For some social movements, time must pass before local action can see a profound impact. Generations come and go, and with those generations societies change, as do social norms and desires. It requires patience and persistence to work for gradual social change. While one person may be the catalyst, it requires the help and support of many to carry out that change that will last after that person is gone.

One of the most important components to initiating social change is local action. Different groups of people are susceptible to the same of problems and worries. If everyone engages in an effort to make changes in their own local communities, then there is not only an overall global impact, but these individual communities can also help one another. Connections can be established between small communities, and with that network of help, movements can create large-scale improvement in society. If every community worked to address local issues, then communities everywhere would create a global movement towards locally-driven repairing of communities. By at first recognizing one’s own problems and addressing one’s own local concerns, the groundwork is set for a much larger global effort. With proper care, a seed of change will eventually become a well-rooted tree that can provide shelter to those who seek it.

When looking to make a social change and to have a global impact, it is not necessary to have lots of money, power or connections; rather, the key is to be able to look into one’s own community, find the problem and start from there to better society.

NOTES
2 The Nation. March, 1996
Volunteers say, “All activists do is talk...” Activists ask, “Why do they volunteer? There’s so many bigger problems in the world...”

Activists from Students for a Just Society and volunteers with the Waltham Group talked about how to bridge perceived barriers and work together for social change. Mari Fitzduff, who has done conflict transformation work around the globe, facilitated groups of activists and volunteers in a dynamic, lively session. Each side came to a better appreciation of the other and a clearer view of how much they have to learn from and contribute to the other.

Community service and activism. Local action and global impact. Are these terms dichotomous or congruent? This session focused on the differences and similarities embodied in these terms.

A certain amount of tension exists between the groups of community service members and activists on the Brandeis campus regarding their approaches to bringing about change. Brandeis Activism and Service brought both sides together to give each group insight into the workings of the other. The activists’ main tactic for change is to think globally and get as much information out to the public as possible. Their goals tend to be more long-term, looking at legislation and public policy. On the other hand, community service groups tend to define themselves as very hands-on; their pride in their work comes from personal connections they make in their local communities. An added motivation for those who advocate community service is the knowledge that they are able to directly affect lives through relationships made while volunteering. Professor Mari Fitzduff led the discussion, beginning by asking each participant to identify as either a community service volunteer or an activist, whichever group they felt represented their ideals best. Surprisingly, the sides were pretty evenly split, with an additional fence-sitting group that lingered in the middle, who were, for the purposes of the exercise, asked to choose which side represented them best. The groups were then asked to give their opinions of how they thought the other side perceived them and their work. The activists believed that the community service members saw them as hippies, crass, impersonal and removed from the issues. On the other hand, the community service volunteers believed that the activists saw them as bleeding hearts, achieving only short-term effects and bringing too little change to too few people. A few more group activities fleshed out these opinions between the groups. Fitzduff finished by asking each group what they admired in the other, which concluded the evening by bringing the two groups closer together. Activists said the community service volunteers showed “measurable results” and had a strong sense of commitment. The volunteers in turn called the activists “brave” and praised their long-term goals.

This was a rare opportunity for activists and volunteers, who usually move in very different circles, to come together and realize the value of both kinds of work and to express appreciation for each other. In reality, both are essential: one approach stops the bleeding while the other heals the wound. In times of political upheaval, for example, volunteers address the needs of individuals in crisis.

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Robert F. Kennedy

Prof. Mari Fitzduff, facilitator
by working with refugees, while activists play a role in resolving the conflict. To assist victims without addressing the root cause of suffering would be insufficient; likewise, to address the source while ignoring those already suffering would be an incomplete response. Volunteerism and activism represent different ends of the local/global spectrum, each vital in its own way. Exploring these two methodologies helps one decide how best to invest one's energies: addressing the needs of a few people as a volunteer, or trying to transform the lives of many people as an activist. With a greater appreciation for both sides, individuals can make more informed decisions about the best match for their skills and interests as they work to change the world, a step at a time.
AIDS and the Increasingly Global Community

Cospersoned by Student Global AIDS Campaign; International and Global Studies; the Health: Science, Society, and Policy Program; and the Anthropology Department

Stella Egbufor, Heller School • Prof. Kyle Kauffman, Wellesley College
Dr. Evan Lyon, Partners In Health • Gang Song, Heller School

Building on the work of Paul Farmer, described in Mountains beyond Mountains, should we focus on changing AIDS policies that will save millions of lives, or should we focus on helping individual AIDS patients? How can we do both?

The speakers—a medical professional, an economist, and community workers from China and Africa—agreed that AIDS is a classic example of a problem with local AND global impact. In order to stem this alarming worldwide health crisis, solutions must be local and global as well: top-down, bottom-up and inside out.

Although the New York Times recently applauded the successes of U.S. medicine in nearly eradicating the spread of HIV/AIDS from mother to child during childbirth, the panelists at the Brandeis event AIDS and the Increasingly Global Community certainly told a less positive story. This panel discussion featured four speakers who provided economic, anthropological, feminist and Asian perspectives on AIDS in the global community. Coming from a variety of countries, backgrounds and fields, each drew from his or her own views on the epidemic, emphasizing that it should be dealt with in both local and global terms.

Wellesley College Professor Kyle Kauffman discussed the AIDS epidemic largely from a statistical standpoint, focusing on Africa, which is home to three-quarters of the world’s AIDS-infected population. In 2004 alone, for example, 2.3 million people died in sub-Saharan Africa from AIDS, as opposed to 16,000 in the United States and Mexico. In the country of South Africa, 85 percent of the military, 10 percent of nurses, 20 percent of nursing students, and a disproportionately high number of teachers are infected with AIDS. The very people who are fighting for, caring for and teaching the South African people are themselves weak and seriously ill. Kaufman has spent and continues to spend significant time in the various communities about which he spoke, not just conducting research but also meeting with heads of state, policy makers, healthcare workers and residents. He stressed social factors such as stigma and the “culture of secrecy” that detrimentally impact the situation. He emphasized that while prevention is crucial, “you can’t not treat.”

Stella Egbufor, now a Nigerian graduate student in Brandeis’ International Health Policy and Management program, began her career by opening a health center in a remote Muslim community in northern Nigeria. Her greatest concern is that HIV/AIDS is not selective and is no longer contained within certain “risk-group” communities but has “permeated all parts of society.” Egbufor believes that larger social problems, such as the low status of women, the stigma of sickness and longstanding myths and misunderstandings of the virus, must be corrected in order to impede its growth. Without tackling these issues, there is little hope for curbing the spread of HIV. However, without offering improved medical services, there is little hope of dispelling many of the myths of HIV/AIDS. Treatment and prevention, as she describes it, are not two separate issues but one and the same. There must be hope, organization and services present in order to display a new and educated approach to the virus. Treatment can help in achieving prevention, and prevention will make treatment more manageable.

Gang Song, a graduate student in Brandeis’s Sustainable International Development program, spoke about the realities of the AIDS epidemic in his native
China. While it has not reached the same level of crisis as it has in sub-Saharan Africa, the problem continues to increase at an alarming rate, especially within certain groups, such as prostitutes, truck drivers and intravenous drug users. In China, prevention and awareness is at the forefront of the response. There is an effort to increase knowledge and awareness at the grassroots level, along with mass media campaigns and seminars for local officials, healthcare workers and political leaders. At the same time, active advocacy is occurring on behalf of marginalized HIV-positive and AIDS patients. Public policy is being formulated to publicize the presence of AIDS in the country, knowing that if the problem is not faced, it will surely get worse.

Dr. Evan Lyon of Partners in Health continued the theme of intervention versus prevention. Now splitting his time between Boston and Haiti, Lyon works to eradicate the global AIDS pandemic using a grassroots philosophy. A critical facet of Partners in Health is that it is almost completely run on a day-to-day basis by community members throughout Haiti, making it sustainable over time. Lyon criticized the false creation of “superheroes” in the public service sphere. Some think that the success of Partners in Health springs from the genius and drive of its founder Paul Farmer, as told in the book Mountains Beyond Mountains. But Lyon claims that it does not take a superhero to do this kind of work. Anyone with passion, dedication and direction can make an extraordinary impact on their communities – both locally and globally.

Tracy Kidder’s Mountains Beyond Mountains, read over the summer by incoming first-year students at Brandeis, describes how Dr. Paul Farmer leveraged his work in an AIDS clinic in Haiti to revolutionize international health care delivery.
Do Zionists have a stake in Israel that gives them the right to try to effect change there? This discussion focused on the impact of local advocacy and how actions at Brandeis and in the U.S. can affect the situation in Israel.

“Find where your personal relationship is to these issues and be active. We’re not only about survival and security, we’re about justice and equity, not only for ourselves, but for the world.”
- Diane Balser, Vice President of Brit Tzedek v’Shalom and professor of women’s studies at Boston University

“Do whatever you do, but do.” - Miri Eisen, retired Israeli Defense Forces colonel and consultant to the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston

“You must take a stand,” Miri Eisen demanded of the small group of students. They had come to hear her and Diane Balser, of Brit Tzedek v’Shalom, speak about becoming activists for Israel. Balser and Eisen have different involvements and opinions concerning the situation in Israel, but they came to speak with the common goal of motivating students to find a point-of-view about Israel and to share it with others on a local level.

Eisen, a retired Israeli Defense Forces colonel, was born in the United States but immigrated to Israel with her family at the age of nine. She has personally witnessed much of the struggle and passion that make Israel the volatile country that it is today. Eisen doesn’t claim to know a solution, but she is confident of Israel’s right to exist.

Balser also believes in Israel’s right to exist, but she thinks there will never be security and justice for either Israelis or Palestinians if Palestinians do not have their own state. Balser comes to this conclusion as an American Jew who feels passionately about her role as a left-wing peace activist in the Diaspora.

The first step in reaching a personal opinion about Israel is to be knowledgeable about the country. Once people have come to their opinions, Eisen wants everyone “to be active” in spreading it. She explained that the best way to do this is simply to talk. She said it is simple enough to talk to the person next to you on the airplane, or a cab driver, and that could make a difference. It is important to “talk, talk, talk” in order to combat the negative images of Israel that have been seen in the media since the beginning of the second Intifada five years ago. Israel is not just bombings and terrorist attacks. However, the current generation of U.S. college students has grown up seeing these images and believing that is all that Israel is. Eisen believes that by locally “selling Israel” and explaining what the country is really like to any listener, a ripple effect will occur that will eventually change the global perception of Israel.

Balser disagrees and feels that “it is not our job to sell Israel.” She does believe, though, that American Jews have a vital role in the current situation of their national homeland in Israel. The United States government is deeply needed at this point in the negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. As U.S. citizens, we can make an impact on how the government acts and what the government does in supporting Israel. According to Balser, an American Jew has a special place in becoming an activist for Israel.

After hearing Balser and Eisen speak, I went back to my dorm room and thought about what my special place as a young American Jew and what my opinion is about Israel. Because I spent a very positive half-year in Jerusalem, I do not picture Israel as the country of war and terror it is often portrayed as in the newspapers or on television. For me, Israel is a beautiful country filled with rich culture and ancient religious significance. At Brandeis University, where the Jewish community is so large, I had
assumed that many other students love Israel like I do. Yet, before I went to Israel, some of my Jewish friends could not understand why I was going. Many of them, having been there years before, could not imagine returning to Israel with the current situation there. I was disappointed in my own group of Jewish friends at home who saw Israel simply as a dangerous war zone. I also reflected back on the size of the audience at the event and realized that there had been no more than 20 students in the room. Where were all those Jewish students at Brandeis that I envisioned would speak out for Israel? I felt my obligation to be active and speak out about what Israel is like and change the negative views that exist, even if I had to begin on my own. By sharing stories and experiences from my time in Israel, I could change people's outlooks and give a better image of Israel, thereby possibly effecting change in the Middle East by talking about it locally.

Miri Eisen and Diane Balser offer their differing approaches to the preservation of Israel as a Jewish homeland.

Miri Eisen urges audience members to form individual opinion and act on them.

Event organizer Josh Rosenthal ’07 looks on as Miri Eisen shares her viewpoint with Diane Balser and the audience.
Custodial workers at Brandeis spoke about how and why they came to work at Brandeis from their native countries in Central America, discussing how their jobs at Brandeis affect their communities and families at home.

Interestingly enough, this session sparked concrete immediate action on the Brandeis campus. A reporter from the Boston Globe covered the event, intrigued by the students from the Brandeis Labor Coalition and their efforts on behalf of the custodians.

“Brandeis Labor Coalition was so glad to have been given a forum in which to discuss labor and the Brandeis community. The event was, in our opinion, a huge success. The audience seemed to take away new ideas and information.” - Erin Hull ’05, BLC member and session coordinator

Every day, without ever knowing it, one passes by a person whose seemingly mundane problems are truly global issues. During the Local/Global Forum, three employees of Brandeis’s outsourcing custodial company, Hurley of America, spoke about life as an immigrant in the United States and the search for a better life than the one left behind in Central America. The Brandeis audience expected to hear about hardships in their homeland and the joy they have found here, working in our community. Instead, they spoke of inequity at Brandeis, breaches of contract and difficulties that equal or surpass those in their native country. At the end of their speeches, all three asked for the audience to help them, to join their personal fights.

The event was sponsored by the Brandeis Labor Coalition (BLC), which advocates for a fair working environment for those employed by Brandeis as well as those who work through outside contractors. This was the first time that contracted employees were recognized as a part of the Brandeis community and included in any human resources policy statements - a vital stepping-stone towards achieving wage parity on the Brandeis campus.

Silvia Arrom, chair of Brandeis’s Latin American Studies program, discussed the historical and economic factors that prompted Central Americans to come to the United States. In El Salvador, for example, a 12-year civil war (1979–1992) left the economy in shambles. By the 1980s, a flood of migration from El Salvador had arrived in the United States, and today 17 percent of El Salvadorans live in this country.

Speaking through translators, three of the panelists discussed their paths from their native countries to become employees of Hurley of America. Francisca Escobar, 38, left El Salvador a week after her brother was killed in the aftermath of the country’s civil war. Lidia Alonzo, 35, fled to the United States from an abusive relationship in Guatemala. Jose Jimenez, 42, decided to look for work in North America after realizing that what he earned in El Salvador wouldn’t be enough to repay a loan he’d taken out to support his family.

Changes that occur in one community are an example for the next one over. In this respect, our actions are huge! It is so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that issues are so large they are out of our range. We do things every day that have impacts on this world; our decisions matter.

— Aviva Gerber ’07

All three have worked at Brandeis for several years already without any benefits and with a significant pay disparity between them and the Brandeis direct workers. Contract workers earn $11.35 per hour, while custodians employed...
Brandeis custodians, students and professors discuss the impact of outsourced labor policies.

directly by Brandeis earn $14.20 per hour for the same work. Hurley workers get no personal days and only one
sick day with no carry-over, while Brandeis employees get
up to four personal days and 12 sick days per year, with a
carry-over provision.

Jimenez pleaded for companies like Hurley of America to view its foreign employees as people. He cited
an example of the company sending 10 men to shovel
snow after a storm for an eight-hour period, providing
only five jackets to guard against the cold. Alonzo also
spoke of the injustices of working for Hurley and seeing
Brandeis employees doing the same jobs for more pay,
explaining that necessity often drives people to settle for
undesirable circumstances. She has approached Brandeis
several times about applying for a job but has been told
that she would have to interview for the job in English –
but, as she demonstrates daily, she does not need to
know English for her job.¹ Escobar stated, “You come
to the United States thinking life will be a dream, but
it’s not true.”

These three workers even questioned whether it is
worth the struggle to live here. The problem, though,
is that their families back home depend on the money
they all send back to them. In many ways, they are stuck
here.

Professor Kelley Ready, of the Sustainable
International Development program at the Heller
School, ended the discussion with a look at working
conditions in Central American sweatshops. She showed
a magazine advertising cheap labor for making garments
for companies like Anne Klein and The Gap. It stated
that El Salvadoran women made $0.57 per hour in 1990
and $0.33 per hour in 1991. Escobar said that the labor
laws in El Salvador are in fact good laws but are not
enforced properly. But, despite the terrible conditions
in the factories, the workers depend on their jobs for a
living and do not want to see the factories close.

BLC’s handouts suggested several ways in which
students can help make a difference. The first is a simple
act of common courtesy: say thank you to the Brandeis
employees for their hard work. Even a smile to brighten
the day of someone who works so hard to make your
life more comfortable is a kind step. Another step is to
participate in the worker appreciation activities or help
out with the student-initiated and student-run ESL program. Dedicating just a little bit of time each week to helping a Brandeis employee learn English can make a world of difference to that person. Finally, students can get involved in the BLC initiative to end unfair conditions for contract workers. The worst thing we can do is to do nothing at all.

Addressing wage inequity at Brandeis is a way in which actions taken on one campus can influence other campuses, possibly change Hurley of America’s policies and perhaps even make a difference to employees’ communities in El Salvador.²

NOTES

¹ Debra Gratto, associate vice president for human resources, issued the following statement after this session: “The University does not require custodians to be fluent in English, nor, as I have heard, is there a requirement that [prospective] custodial staff interview in English. Applicants may interview in Spanish; however, rudimentary job-related English, enough to answer very basic questions and understand labels (to assure safety), is a plus for job applicants.”

² On August 8, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Peter B. French announced that the University agreed to a new five-year contract the union representing custodial workers on campus. As part of that contract, the University will post new custodial positions on August 1, 2006 to replace the work now being done by contractors. Current contract employees will be able to apply for those positions. In the interim period, all contract custodians doing work at Brandeis will receive the same wage rate as Brandeis-employed custodians, retroactive to July 1, 2005.

An article, written by Stephanie V. Siek, appeared in the Boston Globe on February 17, 2005, one week after the event at Brandeis.
Pamela Means Concert
Cospersoned by Students for Environmental Action

Steve Laferriere ’05, Kim Leiken ’07 and Ava Morgenstern ’06 contributed to this article.

Pamela Means is a singer, songwriter and activist on issues ranging from fair-trade coffee to gay rights. Her incisive lyrics, “kamikaze guitar style” and “stark, defiant songs” (New York Times Magazine) have challenged the status quo and won her nationwide acclaim. Rebecca Katz ’05 opened on guitar.

“Students looking for a good time, good company and good music filled the Stein on Thursday for an evening of inspiring music from activist and singer-songwriter Pamela Means,” wrote Justice reporter Michelle Minkoff ’08. “She discussed her sources of inspiration between songs. She started with “Truth,” a work detailing her belief that anyone can make a difference. Emphasizing the maxim “truth is ammunition,” Means discussed the importance of self-expression. Every note of Means’ performance was filled with vibrant enthusiasm and energy.”

Though we are frequent patrons of the Stein, on the night of February 10 we could hardly recognize it. It was filled with a diverse crowd of people bustling about in an attempt to find a seat. These Brandeisians were all excited for the Pamela Means concert. Pamela Means is a singer and songwriter who uses her musical talents as part of her activism, expressing her opinions about issues such as racial inequality and gay rights. Free fair-trade coffee was provided to the audience to increase awareness about this topic.

Pamela Means took the stage with her uncommon style of clothing and wild hair. She was wearing a T-shirt that read “America is for sale,” and her hair was puffed out in a fluffy Afro. The wear on her guitar and the tape on her hands told the audience that she is dedicated to her music, and her performance did not disappoint. She used multiple guitar techniques and, at times, multiple capos, too. Her first song contained lyrics such as “count your blessings” and “life’s task is to notice,” instilling in the spectators a greater awareness of society’s obstacles. Her second song, “Truth,” expressed her personal observations of her hometown of Milwaukee and included the powerful lines, “Truth is ammunition / Knowledge is power / Love is political / Every hour we’re wasting is critical.” This song prepared the audience for the activist messages of the night and urged us to act against society’s errors.

The next song, “Two Halves,” dealt with the issue of racial profiling. Some rather prominent lines were, “Though there are two halves of me / There’s only one half they will see / Though there are two halves of me / To a racist cop out on the beat / Another black bitch is all I be.”

The next three songs, “Restless,” “Augusta” and “California,” changed the pace of the concert. They were much mellower and seemed to be love songs instead of songs with a message about the nature of society. Prior to “California,” Means congratulated the state of Massachusetts for legalizing same-sex marriage. In this song, amidst intricate guitar work and emotionally evocative notes, Means sang placidly of “two girls barebacked” in a “twilight desert,” soaking up California’s "smoke and dirt and salty sea.”

Means next broke into perhaps her most overtly political song of the set, “O.D.” – which stands for “oil dependency” as well as “overdose.” Infurated and passionate, Means spat out an indictment of President George W. Bush’s foreign policy, charging his administration with “government initiatives made on behalf of oil companies.” She also sang, “We need more military bases / To force-feed American faces / On each and every continent / With resources to complement / Our addiction to affluence.”

Here, Means explicitly linked American over-consumption with exploitation of others. This song related closely to the theme of Local Action/Global Impact, although in a negative sense. The “local action” of excess oil consumption is intertwined with the United States’ “global impact” as it searches for natural resources to mine.

Means again switched moods by playing a jazz song from her side project, Strictly Jazz. She followed this song
by covering Billie Holiday's haunting “Strange Fruit,” a song about the lynching of African-Americans in the American South, and dedicated it to James Cameron, founder of the Black Holocaust Museum. She sang quietly of “Black bodies swinging in the Southern breeze / Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.” This song reminded the audience that racial violence is always a pressing concern. Lynching may be a practice of the past, at least in the United States, but other forms of racial brutality and oppression persist today.

Her next song responded to the audience’s thirst for information about solving the problems described in her music. It was about “standing up for yourself even if your voice shakes.” This powerful song, “Maybe You Should,” dealt with sexual harassment at a deeply personal level. Means's strong voice and furious guitar strumming gave a resonance to the line, “Contents under pressure will explode.” After detailing an experience of fearing gender-based violence, Means questioned, “Why should any woman ever be afraid?”

Means ended on this note of uncertainty, yet also of hope. Her faith in her listeners is deep; she seems to trust us to think seriously about violence and injustice and also to take steps to fix them. While many of this generation remain silent in the face of massive oppression, both domestically and abroad, Pamela Means roars with conviction and fire. She challenges us with her incisive protests of injustice and also reassures us with her songs of love and empowerment. Challenging the unnecessary dichotomy between art and politics, she helps us to fuse the two in shaping the soundtrack of our own activism and of our own lives.
Faith In Action: From Brandeis to Nicaragua, From Boston to Sudan
Cosponsored by Hillel, the Chaplaincy and Latin American Studies

Ray Hammond, African Methodist Episcopal Church in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts
• Corey Hope Leaffer ’04 • Larry Sternberg, Hillel

Amy Schiller ’06 contributed to this article.

Ray Hammond, Reverend of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Jamaica Plain, and Corey Hope Leaffer ’04, who worked with American Jewish World Service’s Alternative Spring Break program in Latin America, were joined by moderator Larry Sternberg, executive director of Hillel, for this powerful presentation.

Hammond discussed the work that his family and congregation have done to address the issue of slavery in the Sudan by facilitating the development of an underground railroad.

Religious communities are powerful change agents for many reasons: their involvement with disadvantaged populations, their potential to serve as an organic source of community organizing and their faith as an “inspiration” or motivation for involvement and change. Even those who may not be inclined to activism become more sensitive to the imperative to improve the lives of others.

Ray Hammond spoke about the connections faith institutions have in marginalized communities. Churches, synagogues and mosques are often doing front-line service work on everything from at-risk youth intervention to homelessness, serving as “honest brokers between the privileged and the poor.” Hammond believes that religious institutions have the ability and the responsibility to “speak for those with no voice” and “to prick the conscience of a nation.”

Corey Hope Leaffer ’04 spoke about her introduction to faith-based activism through American Jewish World Service. Her trip to Nicaragua to assist at a women’s health collective was her first conscious integration of Judaism into her life of activism. As a Jewish Brandeis student, she found it helpful to bring together different streams of Judaism that typically do not intersect on campus. Religious Jews and secular or liberal Jews have a lot to learn from one another and can be valuable strategizing partners in social change, although they may come with different motivations. Working as an organizer with Service Employees International Union in Lynn, Massachusetts, a part of the Jewish Organizing Initiative, Leaffer feels a connection with the “amazing history of Jewish labor organizers.”

The panelists also addressed ways to forge the connection between political values and religious values in individuals. Hammond stated that social action occurs at the intersection of three things: convictions (an individual’s righteous indignation); communities (who mediate or filter those convictions and support you in the work); and circumstances (opportunities and capabilities). Hope is a major value that churches reinforce through the strength people find in faith and community, even when reality seems unstable and frightening.

Leaffer spoke of the Jewish value called “tzedakah” (charity, good deeds): “Sometimes giving support is not the most effective way of creating change...[support from the outside] has to both lessen people’s needs and strengthen their own capacity to meet those needs.”

Studying her specific Jewish faith motivated Leaffer to approach social action in a new way, with a greater sense of tradition and connection to a community from which she had previously felt alienated.

Dan Terris, director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, asked how we could use the language of faith in activism so that it maintains its integrity but doesn’t scare people with fears of proselytizing. Both Hammond and Leaffer responded by speaking of the peril of disingenuous persuasion in a

“ How wonderful is it that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

— Anne Frank
democracy and the subsequent imperative for religious institutions to promote dialogue as a method for civic discourse.

When asked how leaders could make global issues really resonate for people as more than just distant conflicts, Hammond described his theory about people’s likelihood to care about a particular issue: 5 to 10 percent of people can be moved to see the relevance of an issue such as the Sudanese genocide by morality alone, while 65 percent are so busy and weary from day-to-day struggles that you have to really work to convince them. The remaining 25 to 30 percent will only be persuaded with arguments of economic self-interest. It is therefore the mission of religious institutions to spark the interest of that middle 65 percent.
Local Action/Global Impact Spotlight: Faith in Action: From Brandeis to Nicaragua, From Boston to Sudan

Excerpts from Reverend Ray Hammond’s presentation on efforts to facilitate an “underground railroad” in the Sudan.

Though it was just one of 14 sessions, Ray Hammond’s presentation on his congregation in Jamaica Plain and the underground railroad in Sudan eloquently asked and answered the overarching questions posed by the Local Action/Global Impact forum. The following is an excerpt from that presentation.

From the Christian story of the Good Samaritan, to the Jewish commitment to “tikkun olam” (repair the world), to the Islamic practice of caring for the poor—almost every faith tradition has a call to help those who are in trouble. The question becomes, “how do you convince people to spend resources raised by the members of the congregation on people who will never, most likely, come to that congregation; whose problems are very different? How do you get people to look beyond their own immediate needs—or the needs directly around them—to understand that they have a commitment to go beyond that?”

My wife, Reverend Gloria E. White-Hammond, wrote: “After 21 hours of almost 9,000 miles in the air, I arrived (along with a team from Boston and Switzerland) in a small village in Southern Sudan. The next day, I participated in the redemption of almost 2,000 slaves—all of them women and children. Over the subsequent days, I interviewed many of those women. I repeatedly heard stories of abduction, murder, gang rapes, people being sold like property, genital mutilation, forced religious conversions, beatings, arson, and unimaginable sexual abuse. I went to the Sudan a concerned woman and I returned from the Sudan an angry woman. Angry that a peaceful people have had to endure almost two decades of persecution at the hands of a government in Khartoum. Angry that the world would turn its head while millions were killed and hundreds of thousands were enslaved.”

In the face of the needs that are out there, the resources that are available from the faith communities are, quite frankly, pretty puny. The resource that I think the faith communities do have, which is unbelievably powerful, is the moral authority that they bring when they are engaged with the problem. It is not powerful when they are sitting on the sidelines telling the government what they ought to be doing; rather the power comes from being directly engaged with the problem. From that platform, they speak on behalf of those who often have no voice. That is when they are at their best, at their most powerful. In a very real sense, that is what we are trying to do in Sudan. It was great to be a part of seeing two thousand people set free, but the problem is that there are another 98,000 still in northern Sudan. Many more are going to be enslaved unless something can be done to change policy in a world that, by and large, has fallen asleep on the issues. That is true in the work that we do locally. It is also true of the work that we do globally.

It is a tough balancing act between one’s own faith community and reaching beyond the congregation. It’s not either/or: both are important. If I do not do the kind of community-building needed and discharge my responsibility to my local community, I do not have a platform to stand on when I go to Sudan. One reason that my wife and I do this is because we have a community that really stands with us on this.

People often say, “In the face of so many needs out there, how do you choose?” It is overwhelming. I want to recommend to you what I call the “three Cs” of this process: conviction, community, and circumstance. There are convictions that you have to arrive at because something touches your heart and ignites a certain passion, maybe a sense of indignation—righteous indignation. It then also has to be filtered through the community of people that you are a part of, because they

I went to the Sudan a concerned woman and I returned from the Sudan an angry woman. Angry that a peaceful people have had to endure almost two decades of persecution at the hands of a government in Khartoum. Angry that the world would turn its head while millions were killed and hundreds of thousands were enslaved.

– Rev. Gloria E. White-Hammond
are also going to be the people who support you in the process, who hopefully give you wise counsel about how to approach the situation and how to work it through. Finally, circumstances: I didn’t plan to be in Sudan in 2001. Somebody invited me, and I recognized at that point that it was time. We had to really respond to it. It wasn’t enough to just deal with it here in America. We had to go to where the problem was. What was a conviction became a driving passion. Convictions, community, and circumstances often help you to decide what really is your calling in the huge ocean of need.

Audience members contemplate the speakers’ choices to act on a local or global level—or both.
Globalize This: A Waltham Alternative to Sweatshops
COSPONSORED BY THE SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF THE HELLER SCHOOL

Adam Neiman, Bienestar International

Adam Neiman spoke about his work as the CEO and one of the founders of Bienestar International. Located in Waltham, Bienestar manufactures union-made casual clothing produced by independent trade union members in the United States, Canada and the developing world, based on the belief that the most viable response to globalization is a global labor movement.

“Our No Sweat label experienced a 750 percent growth last year. We hope we’re teaching a whole generation about unions and helping them think about their own working conditions.”
– Adam Neiman

Watch out, Lands’ End and J. Crew. One of the latest entrants to the world of home shopping is Bienestar International, which under its No Sweat label produces union-friendly apparel.

President and CEO Adam Neiman told the Brandeis audience that the garment industry in America has long used outsourcing to decrease the costs of production. The major labels are primarily design shops and brand promoters and simply do not have any factories. Bienestar recognizes that market forces are too strong to prevent outsourcing, and that government supervision of outsourced factories scattered throughout the globe is untenable. So, rather than confronting the problem of sweatshops through worldwide regulation, Bienestar seeks to create a paradigm shift by demonstrating a viable production alternative. As Neiman said, “just because markets can’t solve all problems doesn’t mean they can’t solve any.”

The mantra of outsourcing to this point has been to find the cheapest labor in order to minimize production costs. Most in the industry believe that sweatshops, in which workers are forced to work in terrible conditions for obscenely long hours and very little pay, allow companies to maximize profits. However, research is beginning to show that better conditions such as well-lit workspaces, normal hours, bathroom breaks and decent pay actually lead to drastic increases in productivity. Increased productivity should lead to higher profits for the company. The answer of eliminating sweatshops seems to be an obvious one, yet Bienestar is one of only a very small number of clothing companies that avoid sweatshop labor.

Neiman acknowledged the ultimate choice we have within a capitalist society. “Either capitalism can control us,” he said, “or we can learn to control it.” Bienestar was established as a way to empower workers in the garment industry whose job conditions, wages and levels of satisfaction have plummeted since outsourcing began for mainstream labels. Neiman’s company outsources its labor only to union shops that offer workers decent wages, good conditions and a voice in how the shops are run. As active participants within companies, union members are able to cultivate a unique sense of ownership and autonomy. According to Neiman’s business theory, companies that share responsibility with their workers by allowing unionization ultimately increase productivity.

Since product costs are not substantially higher than the costs of major clothing outlets pay for their sweatshop labor, No Sweat is able to offer its clothing at almost identical prices as its non-union competition by eliminating the excessive amount spent on advertising. Instead of advertising in the classical sense, No Sweat uses pro-labor groups that give them free advertising in exchange for No Sweat’s commitment to unionized labor. The company also relies on a niche group

“...For those of us who do not accept the status quo, the question of how to effectively create change becomes the underlying focus of our actions. The multiplicity of approaches ranges from addressing human need on an individual level to altering the less tangible, global systems that are in place. Yet, regardless of each method, the question of how local, individual action can be developed to inspire more expansive social transformation remains the subject of a continuous dialogue.

– Danielle Davidson ’05
of politically informed customers to whom participating in the fair-labor exchange is important. The savings from advertising are then passed on to the consumer in the form of cheaper products, as well as to the laborers in the form of higher wages and better conditions.

Neiman openly admits that he “didn’t get into this business to create alternatives to sweatshops,” but rather because he saw No Sweat as a viable method of increasing corporate and personal profit. Still, the work that Bienestar is doing demonstrates to other companies the viability of abandoning sweatshops. That the company continues to show a profit is proof that business does not need to be immoral in order to be profitable.

The business model of Bienestar is exemplary because it simultaneously addresses issues on an individual and global level. The company is directly supporting the needs of individual laborers while at the same time revolutionizing the way the entire garment business is run on a larger scale. Even though Bienestar’s influence within the business world is comparatively small so far, the hope is that other workers, consumers and companies will begin to adopt similar ethical business practices, thus affecting “ripples” of change throughout society worldwide.

An engaged audience listens to Adam Neiman discuss the global labor movement.
Schedule of Events

■ Monday, February 7, 2005
7:00 pm | Rapaporte Treasure Hall, Goldfarb Library
“First Step: Personal Local/Global Choices”

■ Tuesday, February 8, 2005
5:30 pm | Sherman Function Hall, Hassenfeld
Oxfam Hunger Banquet

7:00 pm | Multipurpose Room, Shapiro Campus Center
“Radical Equations: Civil Rights & the Algebra Project”

■ Wednesday, February 9, 2005
12:00 pm | Art Gallery, Shapiro Campus Center
“Social Change from Theory to Practice”

6:00 pm | Shapiro 313, Shapiro Campus Center
“Brandeis Activism and Service: Separate, United or Both?”

7:30 pm | Multipurpose Room, Shapiro Campus Center
“AIDS and the Increasingly Global Community”

■ Thursday, February 10, 2005
4:00-7:00 pm | Atrium, Shapiro Campus Center
“Art Attack”

7:00 pm | International Lounge, Usdan Student Center
“Yisei: The Legitimacy of the Korean-American Voice”

7:00 pm | Shapiro 313, Shapiro Campus Center
“Wherever We Stand”

7:00 pm | The Lurias, Hassenfeld Conference Center
“El Salvador to Brandeis: The Search for Work, Wages & Justice”

9:00 pm | The Stein, Hassenfeld Conference Center
Pamela Means Concert

■ Friday, February 11, 2005
12:00 pm | Art Gallery, Shapiro Campus Center
“Faith In Action: From Brandeis to Nicaragua, From Boston to Sudan”

12:15 pm | Heller School Building Lounge
“Globalize This: A Waltham Alternative to Sweatshops”

■ Follow-up event: Tuesday, February 15, 2005
1:30 pm | Volen 105
“Environmental Justice: Community Empowerment for a Cleaner Environment”
Featured Websites

Organizations that participated in Local Action/Global Impact can be found online at the following addresses:

AHORA: people.brandeis.edu/~ahora

Algebra Project: algebra.org

Alternatives for Community and Environment: ace-ej.org

American Studies: brandeis.edu/departments/amer_studies

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church: bethelame.org

Bienestar International “No Sweat”: nosweatapparel.com

Brandeis Labor Coalition: people.brandeis.edu/~labor

Brandeis University: brandeis.edu

Brit Tzedek v’Shalom: my.brandeis.edu/clubs/brit

Future Alumni of Brandeis: alumni.brandeis.edu/lab

Heller School: heller.brandeis.edu

International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life: brandeis.edu/ethics

Korean Student Association: my.brandeis.edu/clubs/ksa

Oxfam International: oxfam.org

Partners in Health: pih.org

Posse Foundation: possefoundation.org

Posse Plus: my.brandeis.edu/clubs/posse

Student Global AIDS Campaign: fightglobalaids.org

Students for a Just Society: my.brandeis.edu/clubs/sjsclub

Students for Environmental Action: people.brandeis.edu/~sea

Teach for America: teachforamerica.org

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: epa.gov

Waltham Group: brandeis.edu/studentlife/walthamgroup

Wellesley College: wellesley.edu

ZaHaV: my.brandeis.edu/clubs/zahav
What’s Next?

No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.

Compiled by Alyssa Ross ’07

It doesn’t take much to change the world. You can make an impact with 10 minutes, a few hours, or a summer. You can mentor a child, teach an immigrant English, or help feed the hungry worldwide. Need some ideas?

Ten Minutes

1. Join one of Amnesty’s campaigns! Whether you’re interested in stopping violence in Darfur or promoting fairer trade, visit www.amnesty.org.

2. Visit www.povertyfighters.com, where each click generates a $.25 donation for microcredit loan programs around the world.

3. Chum’s always sells ONLY fairly-traded coffee! Stop by Chum’s anytime, particularly when there is a fundraiser for a cause you believe in. Check www.my.brandeis.edu/calendar for the schedule.

One Hour

1. Teach English. The Brandeis ESL Learning Initiative provides free English language tutoring to all interested Brandeis employees. For information, visit my.brandeis.edu/clubs/esl.

2. Sound off to your political representatives. Let them know your views on the issues that most concern you. Visit www.house.gov/writerep.

3. Be a mentor. Get involved in the Waltham Group’s Big Brother/Big Sister program. By spending just a few hours a month with a local child, you could have a tremendous impact on his or her life. To get involved, contact the Waltham Group (walthamgroup@brandeis.edu), or Community Service director Diane Hannan (hannan@brandeis.edu).

4. Join a club. Check out one of the student clubs sponsoring one of the talks during Local/Global week and get involved!

5. Cheer up a senior citizen or a sick patient. Anyone is welcome to participate in Hillel’s “Generations” program, in which students pay a monthly visit to senior citizens living at Coleman House, or “Prachim” program to pay a weekly visit to patients in a local hospital. Contact Larry Sternberg (sternberg@brandeis.edu).

One Day

1. Build a house for an impoverished family. Habitat for Humanity helps to provide poor families with places to live. To get involved, visit the Boston Area’s Habitat for Humanity website at www.habitat.org.

2. Volunteer at a Boston area food bank. Spend a few hours or a few days volunteering with the Greater Boston Food Bank. For information, visit the food bank at www.gbfb.org, or contact the Waltham Group or Hillel.

One Summer

1. Intern at the United Nations. The United Nations Organization in New York City offers internships for both undergrads and graduate students in a variety of areas. Students can work in areas such as the Adopt-a-Minefield campaign, which is working to rid the world of minefields, or the American NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court, as well as a variety of other fields. For more information, visit www.unusa.org.

2. Become a fellow with the Brandeis University Ethics Center. Every summer, the Ethics Center at Brandeis University gives a small group of students grants to go abroad to such countries as Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, and South Africa to intern in coexistence programs. For more information, visit the Ethics Center Student Fellowship website at: www.brandeis.edu/ethics/fellowships/ecsf/index.html.
3. Look for internships locally or combined with study abroad opportunities. For example, DIS Copenhagen has a summer program called “HIV/AIDS in Western Europe.” Possible internship sites are AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts: [www.aac.org](http://www.aac.org); Health Action AIDS: [www.phrusa.org/campaigns/aidsl](http://www.phrusa.org/campaigns/aidsl); or Partners in Health: [www.phlh.org](http://www.phlh.org).

4. Bike across the country building houses. Take a summer trip across the United States earning money for and helping to build affordable housing. For information, visit [www.bikeandbuild.org](http://www.bikeandbuild.org).

5. Gain legal experience and fight for immigrant rights. Volunteer at Cambridge’s Centro Presente assisting the legal department in the provision of services for Latino immigrants. This is a great opportunity to learn about immigration law and the current challenges the Latino immigrant community is facing. For information, contact Jessica Durrum at 617-497-9080, extension 14, or e-mail [durrum@cpresente.org](mailto:durrum@cpresente.org).

6. Teach English overseas. Global Routes, an international service organization, has a variety of programs that enable college students to teach a variety of subjects to children in many different countries. Visit [www.globalroutes.org](http://www.globalroutes.org).

This list is neither exhaustive, representative, nor balanced—but hopefully has given you some ideas.
The Process

Mounting the Local Action/Global Impact Forum

By Marci McPhee, Forum coordinator
Assistant Director
International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life

An experiment in community organizing, the Local Action/Global Impact Forum tapped into tremendous energy on campus and far exceeded our expectations.

The idea for the Forum emerged from conversations with students, faculty and staff about possible themes for Ethics Center major events. The question of impact came up again and again. What really works? “Making a difference” is almost a trite phrase, but the sentiment behind it is not: how can one really make a dent in injustice and social problems? It’s an issue that has resonance for students with passion and zeal and lifetime careers ahead of them – but also for faculty/staff who care about issues that may be the focus of their lifework, or may be part of their after-work life, when they might have only an hour or a weekend to spare.

What might we learn about the nature of local-to-global social change by approaching it from different points of view and a variety of disciplines? We wanted to create a coherent focus that would be broad enough for multiple points of entry from different angles, enabling all levels of the academic community at Brandeis to work together, interact, debate and discuss issues in ways that would not be possible without such a framework.

Selecting a week early in the spring semester to hold the Forum gave us the advantage of capitalizing on the start of a fresh semester, before the calendar is overloaded with other events and class pressures. February is always risky with New England weather, but it was a risk worth taking to have a week that was relatively clear of other events for this campus-wide inquiry.

We began brainstorming over the summer with a varied group of key players on campus. This planning team consisted of interested faculty, representatives from Student Life, the community service office and the chaplaincy, among others. These summer meetings helped to shape the themes and focus the structure, but also generated a rather overwhelming list of possible topics and speakers. Just like the very themes themselves, our planning team needed to try to concentrate on a few thoughts and pursue them in order to make change – in this case, moving the event-planning forward!

As soon as students returned in the fall, we expanded the planning team to include interested students. We quickly realized that the question “How can one change the world?” really involved several questions, exploring subtleties of the interplay between local action and global change. We settled on two initial overarching themes to start the process:

• How can excellent social service and social action at a local level be “amplified” so that they stimulate broader change and help many more people?
• How do people and organizations balance local vs. global impact? That is, in a world of limited energy and resources, how do people and organizations decide between addressing the needs of individuals and communities on the one hand and the living conditions of millions on the other?

As the process unfolded, the questions themselves evolved – demonstrating that the Forum planning process itself was part of the exploration. Our goal was to address existing questions with personal relevance – those that needed to be uncovered through the process – rather than just create another event. But had we waited to perfect the questions, we would never have been able to move forward.

We defined our desired outcomes, including:

• A better theoretical perspective, in order to make more informed choices about local/global investment of time and energy;
• A better understanding of the context for one’s actions, in at least two ways: to think about what is do-able within one person’s limitations, but also to see the ways in which one’s work really can make a difference;
A better idea of programs on and off campus that are doing work in this area, for volunteer work, an internship or a possible career.

A small budget was set aside from Ethics Center event funds. In the fall, we were fortunate enough to receive a generous grant from the Morton Meyerson Family Foundation through the campus development office, making it possible to expand the scope of the Forum. Funding priorities included a few top-notch speakers or performers, financial support for sessions proposed by students, faculty or staff, and an eye-catching, well-designed poster to convey legitimacy and a touch of class.

Proposals were solicited for events related to the theme, with small grants available to fund speakers, artists, refreshments or supplies. It was fascinating to see the way in which different groups took the themes and related them to their own issues and points of view. Variety among sessions was important; the Forum was intended to be not just a week-long lecture but truly interactive, with different kinds of events, especially those involving the arts. Information sessions and publicity fliers soliciting proposals served several purposes: generating interesting ideas for events, creating momentum and pre-publicity for the week itself and starting the informal campus discussion of the issues. We knew energy was starting to build when students walking between classes could be overheard talking about the issues and the Forum.

The logo on the cover of this publication appeared on all publicity materials, including buttons, professionally designed posters (advertising the week-long Forum and the two keynote talks) and fliers designed by student groups and academic departments (advertising their individual sessions). This uniform logo created a “brand identity” which tied it together and linked the sessions back to the week-long exploration of the themes.

A hard-working student core committee helped to pull it together as well, with members coordinating logistics, serving as liaisons to student groups and departments sponsoring events, directing the publicity campaign, etc.

Networking paid off when two professors approached us, noting that this Forum fit beautifully with their spring courses. Jane Hale, teaching the comparative literature course “Reading, Writing, and Teaching Across Cultures,” and Thomas Pineros Shields, teaching “Internships for Community Action and Social Change” in the sociology department, both worked the Forum into their syllabi. Students in these classes spread out to cover the sessions throughout the week. They submitted papers as part of their coursework, with the understanding that they would be considered for publication. (You’ll see their contributions throughout this booklet.) This level of faculty support and student involvement allowed for vital connections to related academic coursework. The result was a striking synergy, enriching the courses with a host of related speakers and events and enhancing the Forum with a committed group of students thinking and writing about the issues in the context of a larger intellectual inquiry.

The campus radio station amplified the campus “buzz,” dedicating an afternoon show of WBRS to interviews with key contributor Katherine Whitten ’06 of the Waltham Group and myself. The campus television station, BTV, covered some sessions, broadcasting to the campus community and providing valuable documentation as well.

The entire process could be described as “ready, fire, aim!” That is, we were constantly aiming at a moving target as more funding arrived, new ideas for sessions came in, etc. We wanted the framework to be tight enough to focus energy and allow for productive discussion, but loose enough to incorporate fresh ideas as the process evolved.

Our initial expectations were that the Forum would consist of a keynote speaker and perhaps three or four related events. In the end, 15 different events were sponsored by 27 different campus departments and student groups, ranging from talks to workshops to a “hunger banquet” to art-making about lessons learned during the week. (One session was unfortunately snowed out.) All of the events were of high quality and almost all were very well-attended. A large cross-section of the campus community was involved.

The entire Forum was so much stronger because of the energy, ideas and participation of a number of student groups and departments. Even the very event itself is local action (happening at Brandeis) with a potential global impact. Who knows where the ripples from this might end, as we catch the vision of the power of one person?
Many thanks to all who made the Local Action / Global Impact Forum possible:

The Morton Meyerson Family Foundation

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Jane Hale, Romance and Comparative Literature, and her course Comparative Literature 165: “Reading, Writing, and Teaching Across Cultures”
Thomas Pineros Shields, Sociology, and his course Sociology 92A: “Internships for Community Action and Social Change”

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About the Center

The International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life

The mission of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life is to develop effective responses to conflict and injustice by offering innovative approaches to coexistence, strengthening the work of international courts, and encouraging ethical practice in civic and professional life.

The Center was founded in 1998 through the generosity of Abraham D. Feinberg.

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About Brandeis University

Brandeis University is the youngest private research university in the United States and the only nonsectarian college or university in the nation founded by the American Jewish community. Named for the late Louis Dembitz Brandeis, the distinguished associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Brandeis was founded in 1948. The University has a long tradition of engagement in international law, culminating in the establishment of the Brandeis Institute for International Judges.

Brandeis combines the faculty and facilities of a powerful world-class research university with the intimacy and dedication to teaching of a small college. Brandeis was recently ranked as the number one rising research university by authors Hugh Davis Graham and Nancy Diamond in their book, The Rise of American Research Universities.

A culturally diverse student body is drawn from all 50 states and more than 56 countries. Total enrollment, including some 1,200 graduate students, is approximately 4,200. With a student to faculty ratio of 8 to 1 and a median class size of 17, personal attention is at the core of an education that balances academic excellence with extracurricular activities.