

FACILITATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS:  
BUILDING SKILLS, GAINING AWARENESS, TAKING ACTION

An Opportunity for Brandeis Students

Recent incidents of violent treatment of African-American youth by police have ignited a movement for racial justice in US policing and criminal justice systems. These events call for deep conversations and creative actions involving people of all ages, races, classes and ethnicities.

The Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts and the Student Advisory Committee of the minor in *Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation*, in collaboration with the Intercultural Center, is offering an opportunity for a diverse group of twelve Brandeis students to participate in an intensive and deep conversation about their own identities. They will consider how power dynamics affect our capacity to engage in productive conversation and collaborative action.

Participants in the workshop will commit to apply the skills they learn in dialogue and action projects throughout the semester.

Training sessions

Thursday, January 22, 3 – 6 or 6 – 9

Friday, January 23, 3 – 6

Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 9 – 5

Follow-up sessions

To be scheduled

We invite students to apply by filling out the attached form. We also invite nominations of student participants from faculty, staff and students. Applications should be submitted as soon as possible, but no later than midnight Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>. They will be considered on a rolling basis. Participants will be confirmed promptly.

Leaders:

Jane Wilburn Sapp, activist, musician, educator, cultural worker, with over forty years experience working in the Civil Rights Movement, in communities of color in the rural south, and in diverse communities across the United States and abroad. Her approach to dialogue focuses on building trust through sharing stories and acknowledging dynamics of power. She is an expert at building communities through the sharing of music.

<http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/peacebuildingarts/events/janesappbio.html>

Farhat Agbaria, coexistence facilitator who has worked with young people in the Middle East and other conflict regions. He supports people to understand how dynamics of conflict and difference can insinuate themselves into their conversations and relationships. He

designed the coexistence facilitation program for Seeds of Peace, where he has worked since 1993, and now is responsible for training facilitators for that program. His approach focuses on exploring issues of identity and dynamics of power across differences of all kinds, and building the capacity to act with integrity, trust and trustworthiness. For background, check out <http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/events/Agbaria.html>.

Cynthia Cohen, director of Brandeis' program in Peacebuilding and the Arts, has facilitated conversations and actions among people of diverse backgrounds for over 35 years. She worked first in the context of the women's movement, then in a community-based oral history center, and then in regions of violence conflict. She is the initiator of Brandeis' new minor in Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation.

<http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/about/bios/ccohen.html>

Coordinating team:

Cindy Cohen, Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts

Monique Gnanaratnam, Intercultural Center

Jenn Largaespada '16, Student Advisory Committee of CAST Minor

*See application form on next page.*

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**Application Form**

(Note: Feel free to use the reverse side if you need more space. Please complete this form and return to [coexistence@brandeis.edu](mailto:coexistence@brandeis.edu) as soon as possible, but no later than midnight, Thursday, January 15.)

Name and Year of Graduation:

Major(s) and Minor(s) if Known:

What leads you to want to participate in this training? (3 – 5 sentences)

Our dialogues will engage participants in exploring aspects of identity that are relevant to dynamics of power as they play out at Brandeis, in communities, and in our lives. How are you personally connected to this type of work? (3 – 5 sentences)

This training is being offered to a select group of students who are willing to reflect on and discuss issues of oppression in their own lives, and who want to use their new skills and awareness in facilitating conversations and engaging in collaborative action projects. What groups or projects are you already engaged in where you could apply your learning from this workshop? What else might you like to do? (3 – 5 sentences)

Please list two members of the Brandeis faculty or staff who know you well who we could turn to for a reference, including name, Brandeis phone, and email address.

Please check all of the times when you can commit to being present at this workshop. We will convene for three sessions, one on Thursday, one on Friday, and all day Saturday:

- Thursday, January 22, 3 – 6
- Thursday, January 23, 6 – 9
- Friday, January 23, 3 – 6
- Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 9 – 5

Please sign below indicating that if you are selected to participate in “Facilitating Difficult Conversations” you commit to being present at the sessions that you checked above.

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Signature of applicant