FROM THE DIRECTOR – DANIEL TERRIS

The Evolution of International Justice

Twenty years ago this fall, Dragan Nikolić became the first person to be indicted for war crimes by an international court since the Nuremberg Trial.

Nikolić was the Bosnian Serb commander of the Sušica detention camp in eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the summer of 1992, Muslim prisoners at Sušica were assaulted, raped and murdered, and Nikolić himself personally participated in some of the assaults.

The indictment was issued by the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY), established in 1994 to help bring peace and accountability to a region that was still in the throes of violent conflict. The ICTY did not have Nikolić in custody. It would be another six years before he would be arrested, and another three years after that before he entered a guilty plea and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

The ICTY and its sister court that tried individuals responsible for the genocide in Rwanda (the ICTR) will close for good in the coming years. The 20-year mark for these courts offers an opportunity for thoughtful reflection about the strengths and shortcomings of the process they helped establish.

The arts have played a special role advancing social justice and transforming conflict throughout history.

This semester, with input from faculty members from the schools of Creative Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Ethics Center is helping to launch a new minor at Brandeis University focused on the intersection of peacebuilding, justice and culture: Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation (“CAST”).

Based on many years of pioneering work by the Ethics Center – on campus and around the world – in the developing field of peacebuilding and the arts, the CAST minor brings together the Center’s global network and the rich resources of members of the Brandeis faculty.

“Many faculty at Brandeis teach courses that incorporate aspects of art and social change,” says CAST co-chair and undergraduate advising head Jennifer Cleary of the Theater Department. “The minor will allow us to synthesize what we are already doing, and form new cross-disciplinary faculty relationships.”

The CAST minor will provide an academic and intellectual home for undergraduates interested in the arts and creative expression, who hold commitments to understanding and advancing social justice and the transformation of conflict. It will introduce them to the field, advance their knowledge, and allow them to participate in building knowledge and establishing best practices.

“I applied to Brandeis because of the Peacebuilding and the Arts program,” says Brontë Velez ’16. “As an artist I am interested in creating new narratives, expanding representation, and allowing people the space to exist outside of linear constructions of existence through various mediums and forms. I am incredibly excited that in the CAST minor I will be able to learn from and contribute to scholarship that furthers the important balance between

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Brandeis students perform a song they co-wrote with accomplished musician/educator/organizer Jane Sapp (at piano) in a workshop at the 2014 ‘DEIS Impact festival of social justice. Sapp’s work is part of the curriculum of the CAST minor.
Students Speak

Recent graduate Jacklyn Gil ’14 reflects on the impact of the CAST minor:

“Each class I took at Brandeis that is now part of the CAST minor provided me with new ways of understanding the world and myself, as well as tools – including engaged pedagogy, improvisational tools, and artistic repertories – with which to help others heal from the traumatic experiences we all face.

“In these classrooms I was able to embody, express, and further connect with transformative material I was learning, particularly writings and works of art by feminists of color like Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, and Frida Kahlo.

“My experience with these courses, and with creative social transformation in general at Brandeis, allowed me to delve into much deeper levels of social change work – levels that address root traumas along with structural injustices.

Jacklyn Gil ’14, CAST co-chair Cynthia Cohen, Raustin Hernandez ’14 (l-r).

“Such a healing experience, including relationships built with professors and similarly affected classmates, allowed me to leave college with not just a theoretical understanding of oppression and empowerment, but as a courageous, confident, and mindful human, body and soul, equipped with tools that break down the walls of the silos of ‘personal,’ ‘professional’ and ‘academic’ development.

“It was this holistic growing experience at Brandeis that prepared me to step into the life work I have chosen: community cultural organizing.”

Jacklyn Gil is Co-Director of Grant Making at RESIST, Inc. and Mentor Program Director at Sociedad Latina.

Art+Practice

The Center’s Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts is collaborating with the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis and renowned contemporary visual artist Mark Bradford to advise “Art+Practice” – an arts-based program for young people transitioning out of the foster care system in Los Angeles. Pictured: Mark Bradford speaks with Jennifer Largaespada ’16 during meetings in L.A.

Be a part of CAST!

To sign up for the minor or ask questions email Jennifer Cleary: jacleary@brandeis.edu or call 781-736-3377.

The minor’s core course, “Introduction to Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation” (CAST 150b) will be offered in spring 2015.

Details and course requirements: go.brandeis.edu/CASTminor