

Introduction

Mitra Shavarini

We shall listen, not lecture;
learn, not threaten.

– Theodore C. “Ted” Sorensen

Each year, the Sorensen Fellowship, sponsored by the Ethics Center, enables six committed and mature Brandeis students to *change the world*. In essence, the Center calls them to act upon Ted Sorensen’s guiding wisdom of public service.

Herein is a compilation that speaks to these students’ multi-pronged academic and experiential experiences as Sorensen Fellows. Through these essays, this year’s Fellows share their summer experiences with us. Unpacking their oftentimes-difficult journeys, their narratives capture a sense of idealism, hope and determination, not to mention pragmatism and frustration. Ultimately, it is a collection that leaves us with admiration and respect for the students who have written them.

It is my pleasure to introduce this year’s Sorensen Fellows:

Calliope Desenberg ’12, from Sarasota, Florida, is a social justice, social policy major with a minor in women and gender studies. Calliope worked at *Centro de Estudios para la Paz* (CEPPA - Center for Peace Studies) in San Jose, Costa Rica. She facilitated workshops for prisoners, at-risk youth, educators and survivors of domestic violence. Her essay brings to the fore Costa Rica’s contemporaneous polemic: how to reconcile their ubiquitous peace image with an on-ground reality that is mired in violence and fear. In describing

the workshops she led, Calliope leaves readers to grapple with an overarching dilemma: Will the peace workshops that she facilitated have a lasting impact against the tide of violence consuming Costa Rica? Are the workshops hope or a band-aid? And if the latter, where would Costa Ricans be without them?

Jessye Kass ’13, from Concord, Massachusetts, is a double major in anthropology and African and Afro-American studies. She also has a minor in social policy. As a Sorensen Fellow Jessye worked for the Attukwei Art Foundation in Accra, Ghana. The organization brings art projects to students living in underprivileged areas, specifically those who have been victims of sex slavery or child labor. As Jessye’s essay demonstrates, it’s often not easy to articulate one’s deep-seated passion. It’s also not easy to work with a vulnerable population and then have to share their stories. Such a burden was Jessye’s – to tell us how she used art to heal the sexually abused girls with whom she worked in Ghana. Her narrative reveals that it certainly requires maturity to do her work, but it also demands a strong-willed heart.

Sarah Michael ’12, from Keller, Texas, is a health: science, society and policy major. Sarah spent her summer at Children’s Association for Maximum Potential (CAMP), a summer program for individuals

with special needs. CAMP brings together two populations: people with and those without disabilities. In this merger, CAMP facilitates empathy, compassion and communication between these two groups. Sarah's narrative features the portraits of four individuals at CAMP. Her narrative leaves us with a profound lesson: look beyond an individual's disability and understand all that makes them (and us) unique.

Shani Rosenbaum '12, from Seattle, Washington, majors in Near Eastern and Judaic studies with a minor in creative writing. Shani interned at Hotline for Migrant Workers in Tel Aviv, Israel. This non-profit organization promotes the rights of migrant workers and refugees and strives to eliminate human trafficking in Israel. Shani's essay – a blend of vignettes – highlights how today's influx of African asylum seekers are challenging Israel's social fabric. Interestingly, the themes her essay touches upon are indeed the very same issues other nations – including our own—are struggling to balance.

Piyawat "Paul" Sukijthamapan '13, originally from central Thailand, now a resident of Arlington, Massachusetts, double majors in biology and health: science, society and policy. Paul was a medical intern with the Bairo Pite Clinic in East Timor, which provides free healthcare to that nation's impoverished rural population. Paul, who is more at ease using a stethoscope to care for patients than a pen to write an introspective narrative, offers us an eloquent piece about his experience at the Bairo Pite Clinic. His essay tells us about the non-medical, but nevertheless imperative features of Bairo Pite's healthcare: moral principle, compassion and persistence.

Sarah Van Buren '13, originally from Tokyo, Japan, but currently recognizing Falls Church, Virginia as home is a double major in biochemistry and international and global studies. Sarah's internship took her to Wildflower Home in Chiang Mai,

Thailand. Wildflower Home serves not only as a shelter but also a clinic and school for women who have been victims of sexual abuse and the sex trade. Sarah's essay looks at five programs the Home offers its young female clientele. We learn how the women Sarah met are able to leave behind their abusive backgrounds and venture onto a road of recovery through the efforts of these programs.

The Sorensen Fellows are vetted through a competitive application process. Once selected, the Fellows are required to take a spring semester course that intellectually prepares them for their summer field project. In addition to this course, the Fellows participate in a spring semester workshop that introduces them to the social science research method of "portraiture."

Then comes summer and they depart to the far corners of the globe to make a difference. They stay in close communication with the Center and with each other, sharing stories, probing questions, engaging in one another's experiences: back and forths that forge a community.

Once back on campus in the fall, the students participate in my writing seminar. This class challenges them to turn one's experience into a written piece. The writing they are required to do is rigorous and demanding. Not only do they have to grapple with shaping their own thoughts, they also have to help shape and edit the writing of their peers. In and out of the classroom, the students have offered each other abiding criticism and support. After all, it takes a village to tell one's story.

Without a doubt, this book is a communal effort.

This community would not exist without the following Ethics Center staff: Barbara Strauss, senior department coordinator; David Weinstein, communications specialist; Marci McPhee, associate director; and Dan Terris, director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life. Barbara, David, Marci and Dan: thank you all for being part of a community that has made this publication possible.

Mitra K. Shavarini teaches in Peace, Conflict and Coexistence Studies and Women's And Gender Studies at Brandeis.

Sorensen Fellowship Program

The Ethics Center's Sorensen Fellowship program honors Theodore C. "Ted" Sorensen (1928-2010) for his lifelong commitment to public service and for his 10 years as founding chair of the Center's International Advisory Board. Ted Sorensen was policy advisor, legal counsel, and speechwriter to President John F. Kennedy. He practiced international law for four decades, and was a widely published author on the presidency and foreign affairs. The Sorensen Fellowship seeks to engage Brandeis undergraduates with constructive social change on the international stage, an appropriate tribute to Ted Sorensen.



Photo: Mike Lovett