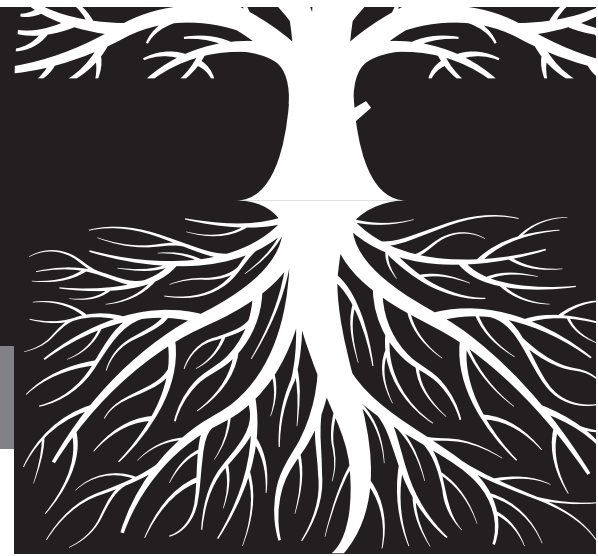


Introduction

Mitra Shavarini



We cannot hold a torch to light another's path
without brightening our own.

– Ben Sweetland

Each year, six Brandeis University Sorensen Fellows set off into the world for a summer internship that they hope will make an impact in the communities in which they immerse themselves. This year, our Sorensen Fellows traveled to Rwanda, Swaziland, Northern Ireland, Palestinian Territories and Tanzania with precisely that charge: Go into the world to make a difference. Ostensibly, they venture to the communities they want to serve with passion and dedication, to make an impact. Yet they come back to find that it is *they* who have been impacted. Indeed, Sweetland's quote resonates fully with their experience: "We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own."

This anthology you hold in your hand speaks to the brightening of those "paths" – a compilation that reveals the duality that is nurtured through the Sorensen Fellowship.

The Sorensen Fellowship is multi-pronged academic and experiential experience. The Fellows are first 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." In this training, they learn about gathering data (including observations, interviews and journal writing), as well as data analysis (by way of finding themes).

They come to understand the nuances of Portraiture and how it differs from other research methodologies, the importance of context in our understanding of social phenomena, and how a context's texture – sound, smell, sight and even taste – is an essential part of human behavior and of understanding. They also learn that Portraiture broadens the audience of social science beyond academic walls by making it accessible and engaging.

Then comes summer and they depart to the far corners of the globe to make a difference. They stay in close communication with the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life 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, which uses Portraiture to digest and report on their experiences. The data analysis and 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. Each of us, including myself, is invested in the success of the other. We work on each others' papers as if they were our own. It is a communal effort fostered by encouragement and accountability, support and harsh criticism, intimacy and frankness.

Now that I have told you all of this, let me introduce to you this year's dynamic group of Sorensen Fellows:

Rachael Koehler '13, from Pennsauken, New Jersey, is double majoring in Psychology and Religious Coexistence. She is a community advisor for first year residents, an undergraduate department representative for Religious Studies, and chair for Relay for Life, raising funds for the American Cancer Society. She did her Sorensen Fellowship internship with Beyond Skin in Belfast, Northern Ireland, which works to promote racial and religious coexistence through multicultural arts and

media. She planned her own coexistence festival and brought people of different religions together in dialogue by producing a religious understanding radio show.

Mangaliso Mohammed '13, from Mbabane, Swaziland, is majoring in Environmental Studies and Economics with a minor in Legal Studies. Having lived in a developing country for a significant part of his life, Mangaliso is particularly interested in the sustainable development of informal communities such as slums in the urban areas of his home country. In summer 2011 he worked as an intern for the Municipal Council of Mbabane, focusing on waste management and pollution control in the urban areas surrounding the country's capital. For his Sorensen Fellowship internship, also with the Municipal Council of Mbabane, Mangaliso worked on finding suitable renewable energy sources for low-income households to alleviate poverty as well as reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS in urban areas.

Karia Sekumbo '14, is majoring in Economics and International and Global Studies with a minor in Legal Studies. Although he is originally from Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, he has lived in several different countries including Botswana, Swaziland, Uganda and now the United States. He is the current president of the *Brandeis International Journal*, a campus publication dedicated to discussing international relations and global affairs. He was an intern with Opportunity International, a microfinance organization in Tanzania, where he gained a more concrete understanding of the workings of microfinance and its important role in global poverty alleviation and the reduction of gender inequality in communities.

Robyn Spector '13 is majoring in Business and American Studies, with a minor in Journalism. Elected photography editor for the student newspaper *The Justice* in her first year at Brandeis, Robyn now serves as an associate editor on the newspaper's executive board. In addition,

she is an undergraduate department representative for Journalism, and has photographed campus events for the Office of Admissions, the Office of the Arts, and the Ethics Center. Born and raised in New York City, she has studied at the International Center for Photography and the Maine Media Workshops, and has been featured in *National Geographic* and the Jewish Community Center of Manhattan's exhibition "ImagiNation: Young Photographers Engage the World." For her Sorensen internship, Robyn photographed and reported at *The New Times*, the central English-language newspaper in Kigali, Rwanda. Through the lens of a photojournalist, she examined journalism ethics in a developing country and learned about the roots and intricacies of Rwanda's history that are ingrained in its society today.

Andrea Verdeja '14 was born in Japan to Cuban and Spanish parents, and raised in the Dominican Republic. She is majoring in Politics and International Relations, with a minor in Peace, Conflict and Coexistence Studies. She is currently the president of the International Club at Brandeis and assistant captain of the sailing team. In summer 2011 she interned at the Jesuit Service for Refugees and Immigrants, working in both the Dominican Republic

and in Haiti. She was an advocate for the legal rights of Haitian immigrants and their children, many of whom are arbitrarily being deprived of their legitimate nationality by Dominican government officials. For her Sorensen Fellowship she interned at the Al-Feniq (Phoenix) Center in Bethlehem, a community center in Deheisha refugee camp led by Palestinian refugees working to serve their residents and advocate for their social and political rights.

Our Fellows are supported by the wonderful 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. I thank each of them for all they do to make the Fellowship an enriching experience for the students. Without their support this publication would not have been possible.

Finally, a word of thanks to this year's Fellows. Not only do they light the paths of others, but they've lit mine, too.

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. 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 Theodore C. Sorensen.

