

Introduction

**Daniel Terris, Director
International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life**

Over the past seven years, more than 40 Brandeis University undergraduates have served as Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellows. Chosen during the fall of their sophomore or junior year in a competitive process, Fellows participate in a three-part program. In the spring term, they enroll in PAX 186a, “Introduction to Coexistence,” in which they study the theory and practice of work to improve relations between people in divided societies. In the summer, students work for 8-10 weeks in a non-governmental organization (NGO), where they have the opportunity to learn “in the field” about how practitioners address coexistence issues. Students have undertaken internships in Sri Lanka, Serbia, Northern Ireland, Guatemala, Tanzania, Israel, South Africa, Ecuador, and Cambodia, among other countries. In the fall, students return to campus and take a readings course, where they have the opportunity to integrate their academic and practical learning in the coexistence field.

This publication, *The Art of Coexistence*, is the work of the 2004 Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellows. This year’s fellowship program focused especially on the ways that the arts can play a prominent role in the work of coexistence, and most of the students’ internships reflected this emphasis. In this endeavor, they were ably led by Cynthia Cohen, the instructor of PAX 186a, who is leading a multi-year international exploration of art and reconciliation. Students had the benefit of meeting and in some cases working directly with practitioners from five countries who were brought to Brandeis under the auspices of another fellowship program, the Brandeis International Fellows.

In the fall 2004 seminar, which I led, the student fellows studied and practiced the art of documentary writing. Beginning with Tracy Kidder’s *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (the text used for the 2004 Brecher New Student Forum at Brandeis), the fellows considered the challenges that any outsider has in bringing a community to life through writing. *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, by Sara Lawrence Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis, provided an empathetic but rigorous model, which students adapted and discarded according to their preferences and circumstances. Most of all, the fellows wrote and re-wrote, commenting on each other’s writing and searching for the delicate balance between clear-headed observation and personal reflection.

The portraits published here bring to life organizations in Cambodia, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and Sri Lanka that, in very different ways, address the difficult issues of coexistence, justice, and social change. They also highlight the complex dimensions of idealism, when it comes into contact with surprising realities. Each narrative shows how experience has transformed a college student’s worldview. Sometimes they have had to curb unwarranted optimism, but at other times they have generated new sources of action and hope through the inspiring example of seasoned practitioners.

Special thanks to Marci McPhee, assistant director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life. Without Marci’s patient, careful work as a liaison to the internship sites, a mentor to the students, and a steady hand at our home base, the Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellowship program would never get off the ground.