

Introduction

Mitra Shavarini

Sustaining Hope: *Six Tales of Trauma and Transformation*, is the work of six Brandeis undergraduate students. Five are Ethics Center Sorensen Fellows; one is a Hiatt Career Center Universal World of Work Fellow. It is the culmination of a multi-pronged academic and experiential process. In these narratives, these students not only share their summer internship experience – experiences that are shaped in contexts and countries drastically different from what they would call their own – but they also demonstrate their ability to merge the intellectual with the emotional, the academic with the personal: a process in which they, as authors, are engaged in the narrative as much as you, the reader. Indubitably, these essays inspire us, revealing a sense of idealism, passion and courage. More importantly, they show the complex nature of social change when idealism faces reality.

These six Brandeis students are:

Elizabeth Bowman Originally from a small suburb outside of Rochester, New York, Beth majors in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies and International and Global Studies, with a minor in Anthropology. This summer she traveled to Israel and interned with the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHAD).

Lisa Hanania A Palestinian recipient of the Slifka Coexistence Scholarship at Brandeis (awarded to one Jewish and one Palestinian Israeli citizen each year), Lisa comes from Jaffa, Israel, and is majoring in International and Global Studies. She spent two months in Kingston, Jamaica, where she worked with the Students Expressing Truth (S.E.T.) Foundation.

Lauren Kraus From Columbus, Ohio, Lauren holds a major in English and American Literature and a minor in Environmental Studies. For her internship, she worked with Family Literacy Lesotho, an organization dedicated to the creation, publication, and distribution of children's literature in the country's native language, Sesotho.

Kathleen Rees Raised in Beaverton, Oregon, Kathleen is majoring in Health: Science, Society and Policy with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. Over the summer, she worked with ProPeru addressing the specific healthcare needs of vulnerable communities in the Sacred Valley near Cusco, Peru.

Noam Shuster A Jewish recipient of the Slifka Coexistence Scholarship at Brandeis, Noam is majoring in theater and in International and Global Studies. Born in Israel, she grew up in "Neve Shalom/Wahat Al Salam" ("Oasis of Peace"), the only community in Israel where Jewish and Palestinian families live together by choice. For her internship, she worked with the Interdisciplinary Genocide Studies Center in Kigali, Rwanda.

Gabriel T. Verzino Born in Malden, raised in Newton, Massachusetts, Gabe is majoring in Health: Science, Society and Policy. As a Hiatt Career Center Universal World of Work (WOW) Fellow, he interned with the psychiatry department of UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Preparation for the pieces herein began in Spring 2009 when, in addition to taking a course that intellectually prepared them for their summer field project, the students participated in a workshop that introduced them to the social science research method of “portraiture.” During this training, they learned about gathering and analyzing data, about ethical issues in data collection, and about the role a researcher plays vis-à-vis his or her subjects. They came to understand the nuances of portraiture and how it differs from other research methodologies. For instance, how a context’s texture – sound, smell, sight and even taste – figures in the research process. They also learned to document their observations and to continuously scan them for patterns and themes.

Upon returning to campus this fall, they faced the challenging task of making sense of all of the data that they had “captured.” Each week, this group grappled with shaping not only their own thoughts but each others’ as well. The oft-quoted Nigerian proverb, *Oran a azu nwa*, “It takes a village,” aptly captures the way in which this group has worked together to translate their experiences into words. Inside and outside of the classroom, they have offered each other constructive criticism and support – a solidarity that I have not witnessed in my years of teaching.

There are several people whom I, along with the students, would like to acknowledge: Aaron Breslow ’10, an astute teaching assistant who has been an invaluable asset to the classroom dynamic this year; Barbara Strauss ’02, the Ethics Center’s senior department coordinator who continues – as she does every year – to help students throughout the internship process; and David Weinstein, program specialist with the Ethics Center, who, in filling in for Marci McPhee this year, has been able to jump hurdles with all of our requests, particularly when it came to the publication of this compilation. And finally, Dan Terris, director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life. It is with Dan’s guidance that this class is made possible. Aaron, Barbara, David and Dan – thank you. You all have been a part of the “village” that made this year’s compilation possible.

Mitra 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 for his lifelong commitment to public service and for his ten 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 has practiced international law for four decades, and is 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.

