



Introduction

Mitra Shavarini

You are about to journey into the 2010 summer experiences of six Brandeis students. It is a journey of words, narratives that explore the notion of community, that examine the self, and that infuse personal insights with literature.

The pieces that you will read speak as much about these six individuals as they do about the fellowship that sponsors them and the University that educates them. Each piece, you will note, has an undercurrent of social change; a tone of activism. And each piece, you will come to realize, has been a labor of both emotion and intellect.

Let me introduce to you these dynamic Brandeis students. Five are Sorensen Fellows, sponsored by the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life at Brandeis University:

Kayla Dinces '12. Originally from Camden, Maine, Kayla majors in Theater Arts and minors in Peace, Conflict and Coexistence Studies and Religious Studies. This past summer she worked with school children in India, in one of Mumbai's slum neighborhoods. Her essay brings to us nuances of this community: its economy, its ability to maintain a positive outlook despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and its role with NGOs such as Parivartan, the group which sponsored her internship.

Kelsey Grab '12 was raised in Middleborough, Massachusetts, and is a double major in Studio Art and Sociology with a minor in Peace and Coexistence Studies. This past summer, Kelsey, too, went to India, to an internship site in Bangalore. In her essay, Kelsey offers us a different angle to her internship experience. Using observations in a modern-day coffee shop, she reveals various facets of modernism she noted in Bangalore, one of which is the salience of poverty vis-à-vis a rising consumer-oriented culture.

Christopher Lau '12 grew up in Farmington, Connecticut. He is double majoring in Economics and Politics, with a minor in East Asian Studies. His internship experience took him to an Andean village in Ecuador through the WorldTeach program. Through his vignettes, Chris proffers insight into how primary and secondary education is not only impacting the children but also the adults of this tightly linked agrarian community.

Tess Raser '12. From the Chicago area, Tess is majoring in International and Global Studies and minoring in Women's and Gender Studies. During her internship with the Women's Education and Economic Centre (WEECE) in Moshi, Tanzania, Tess was able to interview 25 women who receive assistance from that organization. Using her interview data, she portrays the lives of five of these women in Tanzania's Kilimanjaro region.

Madeleine Stix '12 is from Washington Heights, in New York City. She is majoring in International & Global Studies and minoring in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (IMES) and Hispanic Studies. Last summer she interned at the Spirit of Youth Association for Environmental Service in Cairo, Egypt. In particular, she worked with the Zabaleen, a Coptic Christian recycling community on the outskirts of Cairo. Her essay seeks to understand the factors that bind this marginalized, and often oppressed, community together.

Matthew Kupfer '12. From Phoenix, Arizona, Matt is a double major in International & Global Studies and Anthropology. This past summer, he sponsored his own internship in Kyrgyzstan. Finding himself amidst ethnic

violence in Osh during his first week, he re-assembled his plans and evacuated to Bishkek. His new internship was with the Kyrgyzstani branch of the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX). Matt's essay parallels the history of Kyrgyz politics with his own internship experience.

This compilation, I should note, is the culmination of a multi-pronged academic and experiential process. Preparation for these pieces began in the fall of 2009 with the selection of the Sorensen Fellows through a competitive application process.

Then, in the spring of 2010, in addition to taking a course that intellectually prepared them for their summer field project, they participated in a workshop that introduced them to the social science research method of "portraiture." During this training, they learned about gathering data, about research's ethical issues, and about the role researchers play vis-à-vis their subjects. They came to understand the nuances of portraiture and how it differs from other research methodologies. For instance, portraiture stresses self-reflexivity – or, as I kept repeating to the group, the importance of including yourself, your biases, and your perspective – in collecting, analysis and write-up of data. Needless to say, it is a rigorous and demanding process but one that ultimately has given them a valuable skill set.

In our fall class, the students faced the difficult and challenging task of turning what they had captured as data into something that not only made sense, but also told their stories and described their journeys. Each week, they grappled with shaping their own thoughts as well as those of

their peers. Inside and outside of the classroom, they have offered each other abiding criticism and support.

These pages would not have been possible without the efforts of the following colleagues: Barbara Strauss, the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life's senior department coordinator, who each year plays a valuable role for the students throughout the year as she shepherds them through the internship process; David Weinstein, communications specialist for the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life, who oversaw the Sorensen Fellowship last year during Marci McPhee's leave of absence and supported the students throughout their experience – and swept through the pieces in this publication with a deft editorial eye; and Marci McPhee, associate director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life. Last year, Marci took a year-long leave of absence from her position at Brandeis to volunteer as an English teacher in the Marshall Islands in the Pacific through WorldTeach. This fall she joined our class to analyze and write about her own experiences. A voice of reason and wisdom, the group benefitted greatly from Marci's experiences. Her essay will be found on the Center's website. And finally, Dan Terris, director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life. Dan's guidance inspires me to improve this course each year.

Thank you all!

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 (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.

Read a remembrance of the life and work of Ted Sorensen:
brandeis.edu/ethics/about/Remembering_Ted_Sorensen.html



Ted Sorensen meeting with the 2010 Sorensen Fellows during a visit to the Brandeis campus in March 2010.