

Introduction

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This fall I had the pleasure of working with the 2016 cohort of Sorensen Fellows as their instructor for PAX 89, the course that serves as a follow-up exercise to their summer internships. The course has a dual goal: it provides an opportunity for the Fellows to reflect on the work they performed during their internships and the learning it engendered, and it offers guidance to these students as they write about their experiences in whatever way they consider most meaningful.

This group of six Brandeis students was selected through a rigorous competitive process in fall 2015. Those who emerged successful from the process had impressed the selection committee with their maturity, thoughtfulness and intellectual curiosity, as well with their sincere interest in the proposed fellowship site and activities.

Three Fellows travelled to places wholly new to them: Marcelo Brociner [of Somerville, Mass.] to Hanoi; Brandon Tran [of Houston, Texas] to a monastery outside the Indian capital of New Delhi; and Sophia Warren [of Scarborough, Maine] to Jerusalem.

Two Fellows worked closer to home, but in unfamiliar contexts: Jennifer Almodovar Jimenez [of New York City]

in Boston; and Jake Greenberg [of Old Tappan, N.J.] across the state line in New York's Rockland County.

And Yael Jaffe [of Hollywood, Fla.] was in Jerusalem – far from home, but rediscovering a city that she had previously lived in, as she experienced it in a new way.

Their essays collected here, carefully crafted over many weeks, pull us into particular times and places, allowing us to share in what the Fellows saw, what they did and how it all affected them.

The initial promise we saw in this group of students was not mistaken. I was impressed with the spirit of exploration, self-interrogation and collaboration that the six Fellows demonstrated throughout the semester. Our course activities – whether focused on reading, writing or discussion – brought to light the many ways in which the Fellows had comparable yet distinct encounters with their summer internship sites.

Collaboration is not a given when six young people come from diverse backgrounds, grew up in different cities, and carried out their internships in disparate sites across the globe. Yet this geographic dispersion notwithstanding, these Fellows found that their Brandeisian outlook – and especially the passion

they share for social justice issues – served as a common denominator as they described their respective experiences, asked probing questions of one another and critiqued one another's writing.

Other common threads pulled the group together as well.

Each of the Fellows who travelled to a new place, for example, had a prior connection that made the internship experience particularly significant. Sophie had been involved with Seeds of Peace, an organization that seeks to bridge differences across Israeli and Palestinian societies, for many years in Maine. Her time in Jerusalem was the first opportunity for her to see firsthand how such efforts do and do not work. Brandon has been a practicing Buddhist for much of his life, and his internship in an Indian Buddhist monastery was an eye-opening way to see how the religion is practiced in its birthplace. And Marcelo was following the trail of his grandfather, a Cuban artist who had been to Vietnam decades earlier to document the horrors of its war with the United States.

Confronting diverse questions around identity was another experience shared by Fellows. Yael grappled with her identity as the most observant Jew,

and a cisgender person, in an Israeli organization that promotes dialogue on LGBTQ+ issues and across divergent Jewish communities. Jake learned how much his family's socioeconomic status had shaped his appreciation of the environment and his easy access to nature. Jennifer was the sole person of Dominican background working in an NGO devoted to justice for and human rights in Haiti. She quickly threw herself into an important project focused on bringing about accountability by the United Nations for the cholera epidemic in Haiti that followed the 2010 earthquake. Marcelo realized how isolating it can be to live alone in a foreign country without the requisite linguistic or cultural knowledge to achieve any real integration.

Each Fellow was transformed by their summer experience in some way. Yael's greatest discovery was about how to engage most constructively with the "other," and ultimately break down the barriers in our society that create fundamental "other-ness." Brandon's passion for dentistry, and bringing it to underserved communities, was reinforced at the same time as he discovered the reasons for his strong faith in Buddhism. Marcelo's relative social isolation in Vietnam allowed him the time and space to reflect on his future career trajectory. Sophie was reminded that human rights work must be guided by the communities of people it is designed for. Jake learned an important lesson about environmentalism when he discovered how invasive species have been spread inadvertently in the terrestrial and aquatic landscape: it is important to be conscious of one's choices when interacting with nature because even well-intentioned actions can have

unintended consequences. And Jennifer encountered her own inconvenient truth – that an organization established for the wellbeing of humankind, the United Nations, can also do harm and should be held accountable for it.

As their instructor, I underwent my own transformation. Each week I looked forward to the insightful comments of these students. They led me to think in new ways about travel to new places, engagement with local communities and how best to engage in social justice work, whether at home or abroad. I enjoyed seeing how their essays evolved, and the enthusiasm with which they offered suggestions to their peers and approached their own revisions. As the semester came to a close, I felt lucky to have worked so closely with this hardworking and hard-thinking group of students.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life for the critical roles they play in the Sorensen Fellowship program. Without them, my own job as instructor would have been impossible to perform. Marci McPhee oversees all stages of the program and is its backbone. Barbara Strauss carries out the myriad tasks associated with the Fellowship with great skill and even greater humor. David Weinstein manages the communications side of the program, including the expert editing of and photography for this very publication. Cynthia Cohen and Daniel Terris have taught this course for previous Sorensen Fellowship cohorts and their experiences and knowledge have informed my own teaching. I owe everyone a debt of gratitude.

The 2016 Sorensen Fellows:

Jennifer Almodovar Jimenez '18 is from New York City. She is majoring in international and global studies, with a minor in legal studies. Jennifer entered Brandeis through the Myra Kraft Transitional Year Program (MKTYP), and served as the MKTYP Senator in the Student Union. She is a 'DEIS Impacter and serves on the E-Board of the Caribbean Culture Club. Jennifer is a research assistant at the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, investigating wrongful conviction cases. Jennifer also studied international criminal law in an intensive summer program at The Hague in the Netherlands. She attended hearings and demonstrations at the International Criminal Court, International Court of Justice and various war crime tribunals. As a daughter of immigrants from Hispaniola, Jennifer is very interested in immigration law and in human rights issues. For her Sorensen Fellowship, she interned at the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) in Boston. Some of the issues that Jennifer worked on at IJDH included women's rights, immigration, and the citizenship crisis for Haitian descendants in the Dominican Republic.

Marcelo Brociner '18, from Somerville, Massachusetts, is majoring in cultural anthropology and minoring in creativity, the arts and social transformation. On campus, Marcelo works as an adviser at the Hiatt Career Center, and as a Brandeis Beacon, collaborating with fellow Beacons to initiate projects aimed towards creating a strong bond between the student body and the University. He is a multi-faceted artist, mainly focusing his creative energy

on writing and recording rap music, photography, and illustrations. Marcelo is Cuban-American, the grandson of Rene Mederos, a famous Cuban political artist who was sent to Vietnam in 1969 to paint scenes of the war against the United States. Marcelo interned at the Work Room Four art studio in Hanoi, Vietnam. His responsibilities included researching potential projects to undertake, transcribing meetings, maintaining the studio space, and liaising with local artists.

Jake Greenberg '18, from Old Tappan, New Jersey, is majoring in environmental studies and business. He is a Co-President of Net Impact: Brandeis Undergraduate Chapter, a Community Advisor and a Co-Chair of Brandeis' Senate Sustainability Committee. He is especially interested in environmental policy and sustainability practices and believes that there is an inherent interest for companies, nonprofits and government agencies to protect the planet and its people. Jake has created a sustainability blog called "Business Meets Environment," in which he writes and edits articles related to environmental issues, solutions and experiences. He worked this summer as a Rockland Conservation & Service Corps intern in Rockland County, New York for the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland County, building environmental awareness in the local community while discovering many of the natural marvels and challenges of New York's Lower Hudson Valley. Jake worked to build hiking trails and clean out polluted outdoor sites. He also employed his public speaking skills to educate the Rockland community about hazardous chemical pollutants carried by fish in local waterways, the best practices for organic waste

reduction, and various tips for local horticulture. Jake was most deeply involved in a citizen research science program with the Lower Hudson Valley Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management and an educational outreach initiative by the New York State Department of Health's Hudson River Fish Advisory.

Yael Jaffe '18, from Hollywood, Florida, is double majoring in sociology and women's, gender and sexuality studies and minoring in legal studies and near eastern and Judaic studies. She is currently an intern for the Drisha Institute and is involved on campus as the education coordinator for Hillel and the undergraduate department representative for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. For her Sorensen Fellowship, Yael interned with the Yerushalmit Movement, a grass-roots organization that works to build a more vibrant, pluralistic, and inclusive Jerusalem. Yael was involved in the group's various community organizing initiatives, including a group entitled "Women Changing Jerusalem," as well as the "Meeting Point" project - a weekly public gathering for music and peaceful dialogue surrounding controversial issues affecting Israeli society, which specifically serves as a locus of support for Jerusalem's LGBTQ+ community.

Brandon F. Tran '18, from Houston, Texas, is pursuing a double major in biochemistry and biology. As a child, Tran followed one of his aunts to Buddhist temples weekly, where he became inspired by the teachings and chantings. Tran co-founded the Dharmic Prayer Space in the Shapiro Campus Center during his first year at Brandeis, not only to continue his own practice and cultivation on campus, but

for the well-being and education of the Brandeis community. He is interested in gaining a better understanding of how Buddhism, built upon values of social justice, has shaped and helped others. For his Sorensen Fellowship internship, Tran spent the months of July and August in New Delhi, India where he resided in the Fo Guang Shan Sramanera School, a Chinese Mahayana Buddhist temple and school that trains novice monks while providing the students with academic courses. Tran spent most of his time teaching the novice monks basic English grammar and conversational English. Through his instruction, he was able to assess the motives and reasons why these children have led the monastic life as well as how their cultivation and practices have shaped and changed their lives.

Sophia Warren '18, from Scarborough, Maine, is studying international relations and the arts through an independent interdisciplinary major. She is a student liaison for the Brandeis Pluralism Alliance of the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences, an English tutor of the English Language Learners Initiative, community advisor for first and second year students, and is student director of the Brandeis/Al-Quds Educational Partnership Initiative. Sophia participated as a U.S. delegate for three years with the international youth peace building program Seeds of Peace, in dialogue with young people from the U.S and conflict regions around the world. In bringing the value of dialogue to her own community, she organized around policy initiatives and artistic praxis, facilitating conversation on immigration, race, gender, and education reform, documenting recommendations for the Maine State Legislature, and state representatives.

She also worked to develop art and film projects with community partners: the NAACP and Maine College of Art. Sophia interned with The Jerusalem Youth Chorus of the Jerusalem International YMCA. She contributed to the Choir's work empowering high school singers engaging one another in musical and verbal dialogue, using skills in community building, communications strategy, and technological programming. Sophia also conducted research on integrating mediums of art in higher education.

Leigh Swigart, PhD is Director of Programs in International Justice and Society at the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life at Brandeis.

Sorensen Fellowship Program

The Sorensen Fellowship Program of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life 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. In 2008 he wrote, "We shall listen, not lecture; learn, not threaten. We will enhance our safety by



Ted Sorensen with President Kennedy

earning the respect of others and showing respect for them. In short, our foreign policy will rest on the traditional American values of restraint and empathy, not on military might." In focusing their internships and their writing on themes of empathy, respect and trust, the Fellows pay fitting tribute to the public servant for whom the Sorensen Fellowship is named.