

Introduction

Daniel Terris

In many previous years, the majority of the Sorensen Fellows have left for their summer internships headed to countries and regions where they had never been before. Indeed, for some, the Sorensen Fellowship was the first time that they left the United States. This year's class, however, was different. Seven of the eight 2015 Sorensen Fellows chose to do remarkable work within their countries of origin, though not always in the same community or region of their home.

At the Ethics Center, we have always encouraged this type of fellowship experience. Of course there is something to be said for taking a risk by immersing oneself in a completely foreign culture and atmosphere. Such an immersion can be deeply unsettling in the best possible way, offering unparalleled opportunities for learning and growth.

Yet there is also something to be said for challenging oneself anew by returning, in a different capacity, to a place or a country that while it seems familiar, may actually reveal a very different aspect. After all, the Sorensen Fellowship supports an internship of just eight to 10 weeks. For students who are traveling thousands of miles to an unfamiliar setting, the basics of the adjustment process can often absorb a great deal of this period. (The U.S. Peace Corps

recommends that its volunteers spend six *months* just getting to know their new home, before trying to accomplish any substantial "work.") So returning to an approximation of home and undertaking work in a more familiar community, where adjustment is bound to be much quicker, has its advantages. Perhaps more can be *done*.

And, as many of the 2015 Fellows found out, going home is not so simple. Anni Long returned to her native China fortified by her dynamic encounters with feminist ideas and convictions while at Brandeis; her newly-discovered feminist consciousness made her experience in Beijing disorienting in some ways, while encouraging her to take bold new risks in others. Bethlehem Seifu Belaineh discovered that her years of schooling in South Africa and the U.S. had made her something of an outsider in her former neighborhood in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; she had even acquired a foreign accent in her native tongue of Amharic. Wilkins Lugo found that a rural community in northwest Connecticut required a very different approach to community organizing than the one he had learned in his urban neighborhood, though his internship was only 100 miles or so from his hometown of Lawrence, Massachusetts.

Fellows did find some clear advantages to the return. Because of her own Amharic language skills and knowledge of local family dynamics, Bezaye Teshome was able to integrate quickly and powerfully into the Joy Center, which serves autistic Ethiopian children and their families. Shaoleen Khaled was able to jump into her internship at Boston Children's Hospital, leading role plays with interns several years older than she, because she already had some experience in U.S. medical settings.

For some Fellows, a return to familiar cultures meant important challenges to deeply held convictions and hopes. Tove Olaussen Freeman spent the summer in Norway, her country of origin on her mother's side, and where she had already spent a semester focused on understanding her Norwegian roots. Yet her encounters with immigrants from countries around the world exposed her to a completely different, and often unsettling, aspect of the country. Ariella Assouline, deeply committed to the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA) at Brandeis, spent her summer in Los Angeles at the Feminist Majority Foundation, of which the FMLA is a chapter. To her surprise, Ariella sometimes found herself at odds with principles and tactics of the Foundation that had their origins in an earlier wave of American feminism.



Regina Roberg was the lone 2015 Sorensen Fellow who went the “traditional” route, leaving her Chicago home to travel thousands of miles south to Argentina. Her strong background in Spanish language and Argentinian culture allowed her to gain confidence quickly and play a key role in a mental health clinic in a neighborhood called La Boca. Yet even Regina, thousands of miles from home, experienced a sense of “returning” imaginatively to her own background and upbringing, as reflected in her Argentinian experience.

Upon returning to Brandeis in fall 2015, the Sorensen Fellows worked together in PAX 89, a class that gave them the opportunity to reflect on and write about their summer experiences in the context of their intellectual and academic interests. It was my great pleasure to teach this class, and to work with and learn from this extraordinary group of students over the course of the semester.

The result of their extraordinary work is this volume of essays that penetrate deeply into a diverse set of communities and issues, and interrogate the process of social change. There are no simplistic, linear messages in this volume. It is not a “how-to” collection. It is instead a series of provocative journeys through community and personal settings, dwelling on the insights and possibilities of landscapes twice-seen, rediscovered through experience, through reflection, and through the imagination.

The Sorensen Fellows chose “Rediscoveries” as the theme of this volume. Their rediscoveries, as I have indicated, were most obviously about their returns to countries and places of origin. Yet there were many other forms of rediscovery as well. The Fellows found

that ideas and beliefs, nourished in other times and places, had to be explored and questioned anew in the context of this summer’s experiences. They found that Brandeis University itself had to be rediscovered in the light of what they had seen and heard. And they also needed, in profound ways, to rediscover themselves.


The 2015 Sorensen Fellows:

Ariella Assouline ’17, from Miami, Florida, is double majoring in film and women’s studies and minoring in creative writing. She has a special interest in the ways television and film have shaped global understandings of gender and sexuality. On campus, Ariella is the publicity and media chair of the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance and is producing *The Vagina Monologues*. In her spare time, she enjoys watching “Parks and Recreation”, designing stickers, and engaging in feminist discussions. For her Sorensen Fellowship internship, Ariella worked as a West Coast Campus Organizer for the Feminist Majority Foundation. She organized and strengthened feminist student groups on college campuses across the West Coast. She also monitored anti-abortion groups, counter-protesting their “defund Planned Parenthood” events.

Bethlehem Seifu Belaineh ’16, from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, is majoring in biological physics and economics with a minor in physics. Before coming to Brandeis as a Wien Scholar, she studied at the African Leadership Academy in South Africa, a prestigious two-year pan-African program for Africa’s top young leaders. Bethlehem is a member of the Brandeis African Student Organization, Brandeis Encourages Women In Science and Engineering, the Brandeis Black

Student Organization, the Afro-Caribbean Dance group Rebelle, and the South African step team Brandeis Gumboot, and is an Undergraduate Departmental Representative for biological physics. She dedicated the majority of her summer to founding the Ethio-STEM summer program in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, planning and organizing various workshops with students from grades 7, 8 and 9. She recruited university students from the STEM track to become mentors in the program, and worked directly with school administration to create a community of learners, mentors and mentees. She enrolled a total of 36 students and 12 university mentors into the program, and is working to upgrade her summer internship into an organization.

Tove Olaussen Freeman ’16, from Oakham, Massachusetts, is double majoring in health: science, society, and policy and biology and minoring in business. She is a coordinator for Waltham Group and organizes one-time service events for students on campus. In addition, she is the captain of the women’s varsity indoor and outdoor track and field team. As a person of color who identifies as both Norwegian and African American, Freeman has always been interested in better understanding health disparities in minority communities, especially in Norway and the United States. Her passion for research and improving health outcomes led her to her summer internship at the National Center for Minority Health Research in Oslo, Norway. She worked on a project about health literacy in migrants who had been in Norway for less than four years. She partnered with Caritas Working Migrant Information Center to interview migrant workers about their experiences with health and the Norwegian healthcare



system in order to determine what they did and did not know. Additionally, Tove worked on transcribing interviews for a project about children as next of kin who had parents with terminal illnesses.

Shaoleen Khaled '16, from New York, New York, is double majoring in biology and health: science, society, and policy with a minor in chemistry and politics. While interning for the American Civil Liberties Union for three years, Shaoleen developed a strong passion for empowering and advocating for women taking full ownership of their bodies. She explores her pursuit of women's reproductive health through many avenues including clinical research, black and white film photography, and philanthropy. Shaoleen is president of the Brandeis Photography Club, a research assistant at Harvard University's Laboratory for Developmental Studies, and a volunteer at a shelter for battered women and their children. Shaoleen was an intern for the Center for Young Women's Health at Boston Children's Hospital. She extensively researched health information to update and create wellness materials for adolescents with endometriosis, PCOS, and MRKH. Shaoleen also conducted training sessions with medical interns and residents. Through simulations of teen health appointments, she provided feedback to the medical students to stress the importance of communication and how to initiate effective dialogue with teens, enabling accurate diagnoses and suitable treatment.

Anni Long '16 is triple majoring in anthropology, international and global studies, and women's, gender and sexuality studies with minors in social justice and social policy and peace, conflict, and coexistence studies. Born in Tianjin, China, she lived in several

cities in northern and southern China in her childhood. At the age of 10, she moved to Shanghai. She was a youth reporter for *Shanghai Morning Post*, a major daily news publisher in the city. As a young journalist and writer, she published several articles in newspapers and Chinese youth literature journals. While studying at Brandeis, she found her interests in gender, culture and power dynamics studies. She loves vocal and visual arts. She is now working as the Director of Internal Operations for the *Brandeis International Journal*. Anni interned with Media Monitor for Women Network located in Beijing, China, where she joined a continuing project that investigates gender discrimination in Chinese college admissions. She participated in several domestic violence events and assisted group therapy sessions.

Wilkins Lugo '17, is majoring in biochemistry. He was born and raised in Lawrence, Massachusetts. He is a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholar, treasurer of the MLK and Friends club, and a peer mentor for first year students. Before studying at Brandeis University, Wilkins worked in his hometown with Groundwork Lawrence as part of their Green Team, which is composed of high school students working towards environmental stewardship. He interned over the summer with the Housatonic Valley Association in Cornwall Bridge, Connecticut. His responsibilities included assessment of the status of culverts encompassed by the Housatonic River watershed for the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative and Trout Unlimited, for qualities of potential failure or barriers to wildlife continuity. He also assisted with the outreach effort for (potentially) underserved communities within the Still River watershed.

Regina Roberg '17, from Chicago, Illinois, is double majoring in psychology and Hispanic studies, and minoring in international and global studies and legal studies. She works as a community advisor for first year students, is a Brandeis-Genesis Institute Fellow, the program coordinator for the Romance Studies Department's Hispano-American Roundtable discussion group, and serves as a member of the Psychological Counseling Center Committee. In her free time, Regina loves reading, dancing, and photography. Regina interned in Buenos Aires, Argentina at a local community health center as a psychologist's assistant. She helped psychologists with observations and cases, helped facilitate holistic health workshops for both the elderly and young mothers of the community, participated in patient home visits, and volunteered at the clinic's play area for children.

Bezaye T. Teshome '16, from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is majoring in neuroscience and biology and minoring in anthropology. She is president of the Brandeis African Students Organization, a volunteer for Global Medical Brigades, and a community advisor at Brandeis. In her spare time, Bezaye loves watching TV shows, especially "Friends", working on her creative writing, and participating in cultural performances. Raised in a culture where developmental disorders are largely attributed to supernatural causes, Bezaye witnessed the lack of treatment and rehabilitation services for children with special needs. This led to her interest in working with Ethiopian children with special needs, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder, by interning with the Nia Foundation. Bezaye participated in speech therapy and social skills trainings, and in workshops designed to equip parents with techniques to enhance

their children's communication and social interaction abilities. She also worked with professionals in special needs education to plan activities for the children at the Nia Care Center.

I would like to emphasize that the Sorensen Fellowship is a team effort at the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life. Marci McPhee has led the Fellowship for many years, including overseeing the selection process, working with Fellows on their site selections, leading pre-summer retreats, and providing invaluable support at every turn. Barbara Strauss provides the administrative competence and support that allows the Sorensen Fellowship train to run as smoothly and efficiently as any operation that sends college students to far-flung locales. David Weinstein oversees the production of this volume, and he also ably pinch-hit for me when I was out of town for one of the PAX 89 classes. Cynthia Cohen and Leigh Swigart, both of whom have taught PAX 89 in the past, are always generous with their insights and advice. It is an immense pleasure to work with all of them.

Finally, I want to offer my thanks to the 2015 Sorensen Fellows. As always, I have learned a great deal from you, and I look forward to many years of continued conversations as you rediscover yourselves, the communities around you, and the path to justice and dignity for the peoples of the world.

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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 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.



Ted Sorensen with President Kennedy