Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellowships 2000

The International Center for Ethics, Justice & Public Life

Brandeis University
Waltham
Massachusetts
About the Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellowships

The International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life sponsors Brandeis undergraduate students to do integrated course work and field work related to coexistence and issues of ethics and social justice in a global context.

Six Brandeis undergraduates have participated in the program in 2000. During the spring semester, they enrolled in the course “Introduction to Intercommunal Coexistence.” Over the summer, they worked in internships in various regions. In the fall of 2000, each student is working with a mentor on the Brandeis faculty to integrate the academic coursework and the practical experience.

This booklet presents the work done by the students during their internships. They are currently working on completing written projects that document their work in greater detail.

Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellows, 2000

Intern in Grenada:
   Tova Neugut, ’01

Interns in Northern Ireland:
   Sarah-Bess Dworin, ’01
   Sophia Moon, ’02
   Andrew Slack, ’02

Interns in South Africa:
   Nakisha Evans, ’02
   Zachary Sherwin, ’02

About The International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life

The International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life at Brandeis University exists to illuminate the ethical dilemmas and obligations inherent in global and professional leadership, with particular focus on the challenges of racial, ethnic, and religious pluralism. Examining responses to past conflicts, acts of intervention, and failures to intervene, the Center seeks to enable just and appropriate responses in the future. Engaging leaders and future leaders of government, business, and civil society, the Center crosses boundaries of geography and discipline to link scholarship and practice through publications, programs, and projects.

The Brandeis Initiative in Intercommunal Coexistence, a program of the Ethics Center, is designed to engage the university’s students, faculty, and staff in an exploration of the dilemmas and possibilities that emerge when we seek to understand, to promote, and to enact respectful personal and communal relationships across differences such as those of religion, ethnicity, race, class, and political conflict. The Initiative has been made possible by a generous grant from the Alan B. Slifka Foundation.

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South Africa

- Capetown

Nakisha Evans
Zach Sherwin
Project Goals
- To learn about Black life in post-apartheid South Africa
- To assess the role of youth in South Africa’s transformation into a democratic, multiracial society

Personal Goals
- To live, work, and make friends in a different culture successfully
- To learn more about the lives of young South Africans, especially young women
- To learn more about the operations of an international nonprofit, nongovernmental organization

Activities
- Coordinated a Winter Arts program for Black and Coloured youth in Nyanga Township featuring fine arts, drama, music, and dance
- Helped to implement a school readiness program in a daycare (or creche) in Guguletu Township
- Organized a child abuse workshop with RAPCAN (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse Network)
- Planned and researched a workshop on sexually transmitted diseases for the Lifeskills Program for Nyanga schools

Key Dilemmas
- What is my connection to Black South Africans as a Black American outsider? Is our skin color enough of a foundation to create a bond?
- Which is more important to me: being seen by white South Africans as an American or as a Black American?
- Is it fair to apply my cultural and sociopolitical beliefs to South African society?
- Can true interracial coexistence be achieved when society still has distinct physical and social boundaries that continue to separate the races?
Lessons Learned

- In order to live in a different society, sometimes one must make allowances for cultural differences and learn to adjust to others. However, there are some values and ideals that are fundamental to me as a person and an activist and I have the right to demand that they are respected.

- Apartheid bred such a culture of violence in South Africa, that coexistence issues are not limited to race but include gender equality, value for human life, and children’s rights.

- Concern for and inclusion of the voices of young South African in the building of a “new South Africa” is imperative if the gains toward coexistence are to be maintained.
Joining a Community for Humanity
Ikamva Labantu--Cape Town, South Africa

Project Goals
- To help redress the devastating economic consequences of apartheid for the poor black communities of Cape Town
- To be part of South Africa’s transition to democracy and its citizens’ transition towards economic independence
- To gain experience working with an non-governmental organization (NGO)

Personal Goals
- To be involved in grassroots coexistence work at an exciting and critical time for South Africa
- To meet people different from me in every conceivable way, and to experience the culture, politics, and history of an area of the world I knew nothing about

Activities
- Assisted in the establishment of a take-out restaurant at a homeless shelter, Ikhaya Labantu, in order to create jobs for shelter residents and generate profit to help with shelter running costs
- Gave English lessons to Angolan refugees
- Assisted shelter residents with resumes, job searches, job references, and enrollment in educational institutions

Key Dilemmas
- The overwhelming unemployment, lack of financial opportunities, and lack of educational/employment histories for poor black South Africans
- The xenophobia that exists between South Africans and the refugees that are pouring into the country, largely due to the perception that refugees are taking already-scarce jobs and resources, as well as a lack of mutual cultural awareness
- The difficulties of running an NGO (lack of funding, inefficient structure and allocation of resources, intraorganizational personal and political struggles)
Lessons Learned

- South Africa has tremendous difficulties to overcome, such as its unemployment, poverty, crime, AIDS epidemic, and xenophobia.
- Efforts like that of Ikamva Labantu, which provides solutions to immediate problems at an interpersonal, individual, grassroots level, are important to accompany the maddeningly incremental actions of government.
- Progress in coexistence work can be frustratingly slow, but it is important to remain focused and motivated.
Grenada

Grenville

Tova Neugut
Grenada: Memory Moving Forward
The Grenada Education and Development Programme (GRENED) Organization
Grenville, St. Andrew’s, Grenada

Project Goals
- To document the wide range of memories of October 1983 -- when the Grenada Revolution ended and the U.S. intervened militarily in Grenada
- To provide a forum for respectful interchange of views on the events of October 1983
- To generate discussion of the way forward for a fuller healing among Grenadians

Personal Goals
- To understand the significance of October 1983 for individual Grenadians and in the national consciousness
- To enhance my understanding of the meaning of reconciliation through conversation with Grenadians, and to consider how this concept has particular and/or universal meaning(s)
- To deepen bonds developed during my previous summer internship with GRENED

Activities
- Prepared a pamphlet presenting a description of the project and project goals, and inviting participation
- Provided project information and updates to government officials and other significant players
- Participated in organizing and filming of nine conversations on the events of October 1983, held throughout Grenada

Key Dilemmas
- How to present the project so that it would appeal to people of vastly different political beliefs
- How to articulate an understanding of the events of October 1983 that is palatable to people who hold different views
- What is my particular relationship, as an American, to the subject matter of the conversations that constitute the project?
Lessons Learned

- There is frequently a tension between the desire to escape painful memories by “putting it behind us” and the desire to remember and memorialize.

- Individual processes of reconciliation proceed at a pace set by the individual; two individuals may proceed at vastly different paces.

- Many questions about the events of October 1983 in Grenada remain unanswered; pooling knowledge within a community can sometimes generate answers. Conversations that involve a community in shared reflection have remarkable power.
Northern Ireland: Trauma and the Path Toward Healing in Rural and Urban Communities

Corrymeela at Ballycastle; Ballynafeigh Community House, Belfast and Shankill Stress and Trauma Group, Belfast

Project Goals
- Work with a team to create a safe environment in which individuals can shed barriers of mistrust and fear
- Use drama, dance, music, and the visual arts to help others find a vehicle for self expression and growth
- Examine the role of ecumenical prayer sessions in creating a unified religious community

Personal Goals
- Participate in the transformation of Northern Irish society by operating on an individual level
- Understand the complexities of the region’s history and the roots of the conflict
- Build lasting, meaningful friendships

Activities
- At Corrymeela, I worked intensively with groups of all ages and religious backgrounds, planning and leading art workshops, theatrical performances, team building in the outdoors, relaxation classes, and ecumenical prayer
- At the Ballynafeigh Community House, I worked with children in a religiously integrated neighborhood, designing and leading music and visual art workshops in which children confronted symbols (such as drums and mural paintings) charged with the Northern Ireland culture of violence
- At the Shankill Stress and Trauma Group, I reunited with a youth group with which I worked at Corrymeela. I was immersed in the lives of these extraordinary youths, organizing social activities and listening to their stories

Key Dilemmas
- How much can really be accomplished in two months, or even two years? Can I really make a substantive difference?
- Are grassroots organizations effective if vast structural inequity still exists?
- Is it possible or desirable to demystify violence in the eyes of children by taking them to an army base or a shooting range? Does this simply desensitize them to killing and romanticize war?
Important Learnings

- Despite the complicated feelings that arise from entrenched conflict, individuals have immense power to connect with one another on a meaningful, person-to-person level and effect incremental change.
- Even a small contribution is an important part of the whole effort toward reconciliation; no activity is insignificant.
- Coexistence and reconciliation is not an isolated activity; it requires the coordinated efforts of every aspect of society.

Page 14, left: Mural painting on the walls of the Ballynafeigh Community Center. Traditionally a Northern Irish vehicle for perpetuating the culture of violence, these young children reclaim mural painting as an instrument for peace. Page 15, above: “Our revenge will be the laughter of our children” — Bobby Sands. These young boys on the Catholic Falls Road of West Belfast are not laughing. Running past this memorial to the first Republican hunger striker to die for his cause, the children chant sectarian Republican songs with clenched fists.

Above right: Getting a taste of army life: spooning violence into the mouths of children—a fieldtrip with 11-14 year olds from the Ballynafeigh Community Center summer program to the local military base. Normalizing the presence of violence in the Northern Irish context or demystifying the “ugly monster” of war? Right: Self-Portraits: imagining your best self. An art workshop at the Ballynafeigh Community House with the 4-6 year olds.
Creative Ways to Reconciliation and Coexistence in Northern Ireland and Beyond
Rural Community Network
Northern Ireland, County Tyrone, Cookstown

**Project Goals**

- To implement creativity through the arts to establish a safe space in which young people can feel comfortable talking and sharing with others their experiences and thoughts
- To create dialogue among youth in Northern Ireland in order to understand the effects of conflict in their lives, attitudes and aspirations
- To empower young people to recognize their own potential to make decisions towards peace as well as instill the urgency of peace

**Activities**

- Created workshops using the arts to bring young people together based on their common interests as opposed to dictated social divisions
- Created a safe space within the group so that everyone in the group felt comfortable being around each other
- Worked on issues of concern regarding a young person’s experience in the conflict as it relates to themes of reconciliation and coexistence

**Personal Goals**

- To explore the field of coexistence and reconciliation work as a possible future career
- To understand and appreciate the complexity of the conflict in Northern Ireland for its many layers
- To share with young people in their struggles and acknowledge the universality of youth, therefore breaking down the “them” and “us” feelings

**Key Dilemmas**

- Trying to strip away my assumptions about culture and what is “right” so that I would be more open to the culture around me
- Building trust in small, tight knit communities of young people who were not used to outsiders, let alone foreigners
- Working out the identity issue for myself. I am an American-born Korean and I had to work hard at proving my American-ness
Lessons Learned

- I am more confused about what reconciliation would mean in Northern Ireland, but I think that indicates that I have learned more, in that I see the complexity of the situation better.
- When talking and working with young people you have to work on their level and appeal to their interests. But, you should never expect any less philosophy or intellect to come into the discussions.
- It takes a lot of energy for a whole community to make steps towards peace but it takes one nameless, faceless, ignorant person’s actions to cause the entire community to regress into a state of fear of the supposed “other”.
The Corrymeela Community
Ballycastle, Northern Ireland

Project Goals
- To become a member of a community dedicated to peace and reconciliation
- To develop a better understanding of the Northern Irish peace process
- To develop a better understanding of the nature of peace building

Personal Goals
- To learn about the power of a center for peace and reconciliation
- To help give children, particularly those who have suffered trauma, the space to be themselves
- To form friendships with people who can teach me about the world, how they have coped with the pain in their life, and how I can apply that to my own life

Activities
- Facilitated workshops which were centered around spirituality, theater, environmental appreciation, leadership and interpersonal skills, art, and fostering healthy self-images
- Attended the International Summer School, which involved over 150 peace workers from 31 different countries
- Filmed approximately nine hours of my work and interviews with the Shankill Stress and Trauma Group which will later be turned into a documentary

Key Dilemmas
- Can a spiritual community allow people the chance to authentically transform their post-traumatic pain into an impetus for the healing of themselves and those around them?
- If “Corrymeela starts when you leave,” how can I embody its message and spirit in my personal life? Is it possible to help start something similar to a Corrymeela Community within the United States?
Lessons Learned

- By creating a safe space for us to talk, pray, and listen, we can bring forth the power to transform anything (especially when there are children around).
- The culture and history of Northern Ireland is more powerful, complex, and beautiful than can be described.
- Peaceworkers and healers are just like any of us; that's what makes them healers. The difference is, despite their faults and fears, they do not act on them—they act on their imagination and courage.

This song is one of the many from Shankill Stress and Trauma Group's musical “Lost Innocence” which was performed before the U.N. the summer of 2000.

THE PATH OF PEACE
The Path of Peace was written for us by someone who cares about our future because he loved children who didn’t manage to have one.

We dedicate this song and our musical to such children to remind all adults of the right of children to live, love, and be loved in a better environment, in a society free from conflict, free from fear, free from myths.

You as adults can deliver us from the horrors of conflict, create the circumstances for us to respect each other’s views, and to be tolerant.

Listen to us, as you never have done before.

We the children “your future, your seed” remind all grown ups you have not inherited one inch of this island from your forefathers.

You have borrowed it from your children.

We have buried our treasured friends, mothers, fathers, brother and sisters.

A lasting memorial to them is for you desist from using bombs, guns and tongues, that may finally be given the basic human right of life itself.

Being better role models than yourselves, Breaking this chain of hurt, pain and anger forever.

So be it.
2000 Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellows

Sarah-Bess Dworin ‘01, of Chicago, Illinois, is majoring in European Cultural Studies, with minors in art history and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. Sarah-Bess’s work experience includes an archaeological dig in Beit Guvrin, Israel, and a Lewis Summer Internship in Chicago, working in a transitional homeless shelter. At Brandeis, Sarah-Bess continued her tradition of community activism and volunteer service working with Students for a Free Tibet, organizing an evening of Tibetan-Jewish dialogue to explore cultural and ideological exchanges. She co-founded an on-campus club to bring emergency financial aid to victims in Bangladesh, and a new club called “The Brandeis World Hunger Project.” Sarah-Bess also served as president of Hillel Theater Group.

Nakisha Evans ’02 is from St. Petersburg, Florida. She is majoring in African/Afro-American Studies and politics, and is in the Women’s Studies program. During her first year at Brandeis she was a member of the Transnational Year Program. She is currently serving as the student representative to the Board of Trustees. She is a co-founder and coordinator of Societies Organized Against Racism (SOAR). In high school she participated in the International Baccalaureate Program, which takes an intercultural approach to education. Nakisha credits her IB experience for exposing her to the concept of coexistence and helping her to see her connections to the larger world community as well as how to negotiate the inevitable differences.

Sophia Moon ’02 is majoring in sociology and politics and enrolled in the Peace and Conflict Studies program. Her home is Brooklyn, New York. Sophia is an active member of the “Posse” program on campus. She participated in the residency with Jane Sapp, which was part of the event “Coexistence and Community-Building at Brandeis University and in the World.” During the summer of 1999, Sophia ventured to mainland China with the China Teaching Team, teaching conversational English.

Tova Neugut ’01 comes to Brandeis from Amherst, Massachusetts. Tova is majoring in politics and sociology and is enrolled in the Women’s Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies programs. Tova spent the summer of 1999 in Grenada working with GRENED in the Summer Science program for youth ages 9-14. In high school, Tova co-produced a video documenting conditions at the school. The video was aired on community television locally and won the “Friend of Education” award, which is presented annually in school districts nation-wide. At Brandeis she serves as student representative to the University Curriculum Committee, captain of the women’s Ultimate Frisbee team, and member of Students for a Free Tibet and the Committee on Rape Education.

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Zachary Sherwin ’02 comes from Springfield, Missouri. He is majoring in politics and is enrolled in the Legal Studies program. As an eight-year-old he lived in Israel for a year, returning for six weeks as a high school student. While there, he worked on Kibbutz Gezer with young people from around the world, constructing an outdoor worship site. Zach spent two of his high school summers at Camp Rainbow near St. Louis, working with children with life-threatening diseases. At Brandeis, he tutors, sings with the a cappella group “Company B,” and counsels for the Student Sexuality Information Service. This semester he co-founded the performing group “The Late Night Players” with, among others, 2000 Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellow Andrew Slack.

Andrew Slack ’02 comes to Brandeis from Abington, Pennsylvania. He is a sociology major, theater minor, and is enrolled in the Humanities Interdisciplinary program. In high school, Andrew was instrumental in creating an after school program “Coffee Talk;” was cofounder and executive board member of Community Police and Youth Association; and a member of the National Blue Ribbon Committee. His 1999-2000 show on Brandeis television, “Late Nite Snack with Andrew Slack,” was designed to empower humor and activism on campus. He organized a vigil in the spring of 1999 mourning the tragedy of Columbine High School and the suffering of youth across our world. Along with 2000 Ethics and Coexistence Student Fellow Zach Sherwin, he helped found a comedy troupe entitled “The Late Night Players” in which he serves as a co-writer, co-director, and actor. He is a member of various organizations on campus, including Posse Plus, Students for a Just Society, and a non-denominational worship group.