

HOLLERAN CENTER IN ACTION

HC Summer Newsletter 2016

Holleran Center celebrates two decades

by Josh Anusewicz, Communications Writer

Since Connecticut College's founding, the values of civic responsibility and community involvement have been an integral part of the College's liberal arts education. For the past 20 years, those values have been put into practice by the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy.

The Holleran Center celebrated its 20th anniversary April 8 with an event that brought back past directors, former College presidents, and activists and philanthropists Jerry and Carolyn Holleran '60 GP'07, for whom the center is named. "We hoped to create a model that would benefit people and places far beyond its boundaries, and would prepare students to meet the challenges in our communities today and tomorrow," said Carolyn Holleran at the gala. "Needless to say, the accomplishments of all involved with the Center for the past 20 years have far exceeded our expectations." "Truly, this is the gift that keeps on giving to us and we continue to be in awe of its impact," she added.

President Katherine Bergeron recognized past Holleran Center directors Sunil Bhatia, MaryAnne Borrelli, Stevenson Carlebach, Tracee Reiser, Jefferson Singer, Margaret Sheridan, Audrey Zakriski, and current director Jennifer Fredricks during her remarks at the gala. She also acknowledged former College president Claire Gaudiani, who created the vision for interdisciplinary centers.

The Holleran Center—one of the College's five centers for interdisciplinary scholarship—advances teaching, learning, research and community collaborations through programs that develop intellectual and ethical judgment. The Center's Certificate Program in Community Action and Public Policy (PICA), requires students to take a set of related courses and a senior seminar, conduct College-funded internships, and complete a senior integrative project.

The Center was the result of an early 1990s collaboration between members of the College community and New London partners interested in how to best educate students on community concerns. Working in partnership with the College's Office of Volunteers for Community Service, the Center for Community Challenges was formed in 1996. In 1999, the Hollerans endowed the Center with a gift to the College. Today, the Center enrolls 74 College students representing more than 30 departments and programs across campus. Following the 20th anniversary gala, the Center hosted its annual conference. During the daylong event, student scholars in the Class of 2016 presented integrative projects on education, global health, gender and injustice.





Remarks for the Holleran Center's 20th Anniversary Celebrations

by Sunil Bhatia, Department of Human Development

It is a matter of great honor to be a part of this evening that recognizes the 20th anniversary of the Holleran Center. From 2008 to 2011, I had the pleasure of serving as the director of the Holleran Center. There comes a time—rather a beautiful moment-- in every faculty's life when their scholarship, teaching, and service seamlessly blends into each other. My 3 years as the director of the Holleran Center represented that moment for me.

When I arrived at Connecticut College I wanted to articulate a vision for psychology that speaks to the concerns of the marginalized and invisible part of our humanity. One of the problems of the 20th century, Dubois stated, was the color line and that sentiment still holds today as the color line has travelled through the darker nations and it has metamorphosed in to a gigantic ineradicable poverty line. Actually it makes no sense to even speak of a poverty line as the poor now represent half of humanity.

They are our world.

They are our legacy.

They are in the midst of us.

They are our creation.

My vision of being faculty involved a rather uneasy combination of teaching, scholarship and community activism. I say uneasy combination because for a long time there was an unbridgeable gap between my activist work and my role as a psychologist. These worlds often collided because I did not find that psychology had a meaningful vocabulary or a willingness for exploring questions of social justice that were connected to research methods and community based learning done in faraway places, with marginalized populations and that had no history or recognition in American psychology or in the U.S. I found that psychology had a tendency to focus on individual problems at the cost of addressing larger questions of social structures. I believed that it was imperative if psychology and human development had to remain relevant and meaningful in the global 21 century it had to take social justice and public good as central to its scholarly mission.

In 2006, I started a non-profit organization, Friends of Shelter Associates, at Connecticut College with sole aim of creating awareness about sanitation as a human right and assisting the main NGO, Shelter Associates in India to provide sanitation to the urban poor. The Holleran Center with its vision for creating a just and equitable community provided the space, academic support and resources to bring together my ideas and for a creating a more globally relevant psychology.

In 2008, the United Nations declared sanitation as a human right. For a person living in a developed country, having access to a clean, private toilet with running water may not appear like a radical humanitarian cause or a psychologically empowering act. But for many people around the world, having a toilet and clean sanitation amenities is revolutionary. The concluding section of a key 2008 UN report on sanitation states and I quote: “A toilet represents a life-changing dream, a dream of better health, higher incomes, more education, higher social status, greater societal inclusion, a cleaner living environment and, for the children living in developing worlds, a better chance of living to celebrate their fifth birthdays.”

The Holleran Center provided the initial impetus and the springboard for me to develop my non-profit organization, FSA, and through my team we have been able to provide 600 toilets in urban areas in Pune. These 600 toilets have impacted the lives of 3500 urban residents. Additionally, FSA has indirectly helped its partner organization in securing around \$800,000 to build toilets for another 15,000 people. My activist work represented the powerful application of cultural psychology, indigenous local knowledge, community learning and social justice. It was a dream team of a series of concepts that came together to produce a psychology based in lived experience.

I have documented this research in several scholarly manuscripts that I am currently bringing to fruition. I have been the beneficiary of several Margaret Sheridan Learning grants from the Holleran Center and last year I was able to travel India to work with several on-the-ground activists to create documentary on sanitation called: *Safeguarding Dignity*. Much of this scholarly and community based work has now become central in several of my courses that I am teaching. A few weeks ago, I screened this documentary for the first time in class on *Globalization and Culture*.



In 2015, the American Psychological Association recognized my work on sanitation in Pune, India and honored me with their prestigious humanitarian award of the year. That award recognizes my activism but it also an award that belongs as much to the Holleran Center and my department. Holleran Center along with my department has recognized and given legitimacy to what I call transnational or global community service and it has created the space for me to integrate my research, teaching and service in ways that are fluid and not fragmented and divisive.

In my view, the Holleran Center has given refuge to faculty and students who are maladjusted. Let me explain what I mean by that term. In 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. took the podium and challenged the members of American Psychological Association in Washington D.C by giving a powerful speech. King made a call to reduce the inequality gaps between the conditions of the black and White America and he reminded everyone about the need to end segregation.

King ended his speech by arguing that our world desperately needs a new organization and he called it “The International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment.” He bemoaned that our psychology has become too easily adjusted to conditions of great inequality and racism. He reminded the psychologists that the field of psychology has given us this “great word” call maladjustment, which implies an adjustment to destructive or negative behavior. King then remarked to the audience at APA that our society should always remain maladjusted to some grim social realities. King said:

There are some things concerning which we must always be maladjusted if we are to be people of good will. We must never adjust ourselves to racial discrimination and racial segregation. We must never adjust ourselves to religious bigotry. We must never adjust ourselves to economic conditions that take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. We must never adjust ourselves to the madness of militarism, and the self-defeating effects of physical violence. I believe that when Holleran Center states that it prepares students for lives of civic engagement, it ultimately gives them the tool to be creatively maladjusted. This is one of the most important legacies of the Holleran Center.

In closing, I want to take this opportunity thank those key people associated with the Holleran Center who have impacted my professional life at Connecticut College. First I want to thank Jerry and Carolyn Holleran for their philanthropic commitment. Without their generosity, the Holleran Center would not have come into being. I want to thank Tracee Reiser for her vision, leadership, endurance, and her spirit of collaboration. In addition, I would like to thank Peggy Sheridan, Michelle Dunlap, Jenny Fredricks, Audrey Zakriski, Jefferson Singer, Rebecca McCue, and Keisha Henry for their sustained support. Thank You!



Holleran Center helps to flip the script



by Professor Michelle Dunlap

On Saturday, April 23, 2016, *The Flippin' the Script: Challenging the Strongholds & Systems that Have Held Us Back* conference, was held at Connecticut College. Initiated by Professor Michelle Dunlap and students from her Spring 2016 HMD 321 Children and Families in a Multicultural Society course, the day-long conference was co-sponsored by many offices at the college including the Holleran Center For Community Action and Public Policy. The day itself brought 30 Connecticut College students, alums, faculty, and staff, together with roughly 60 primarily underserved youth and families during the day, and at least 50 during the evening. In all, a dozen PICA students and other individuals affiliated with the Holleran Center directly participated in or otherwise supported the conference. It was a memorable day that truly represented community action, diversity, collaboration, full participation, and all for which the Holleran Center and Connecticut College stand.

The 321 class's definition of Flippin' the Script became defined along the lines of, 'learning to advocate and take control of situations over which one initially had no control-- situations that have been shaped over time, or rather misshaped, by societal expectations, standards, and systemic hindrances'. The hope was that the conference would provide a space for everyone to help one another to grow in some small or possibly large ways, changing both students' and the extended communities' ideas about the realities of the challenges that exist for them, and how they might move forward to better resist pre-written "scripts" and re-write or demand new ones. And that seems to be just what happened on that day as students and community members shared and learned together for the entire day.

The conference activities, speakers, and workshops grew out of a two-hour focus-group held earlier in the semester. Conference topics requested by the community participants were many, including improving academic preparation and applying for scholarships, job and career development, avoiding financial exploitation, strategic budgeting, creating investments and resources for home ownership, diversity issues, health disparities and improving health outcomes. Right away, the HMD class's conference planning committee began brainstorming concerning fundraising so that they could provide conference meals for participants, honorariums for speakers and workshop facilitators inclusive of those from outside of the College, transportation for community participants who did not have access to reliable cars, free childcare for participants who have young children, printing of invitations and flyers, as well as diverse books and other prizes. The distinguished keynote speaker for the conference was Associate Professor Jamaal Matthews of Montclair State University's Education Department, whose impassioned expertise provided inspiring advice for "flipping the script" in our daily lives, advocating for oneself, breaking barriers, and moving toward one's goals. Norwich's own "Determined Youth Making a Difference" (DYMAD), affiliated with Tabernacle of Deliverance & Praise Ministries in Norwich, CT, played a crucial role as their youth and youth leaders were instrumental both in the conference itself, and the evening's youth talent showcase. The excitement, support, contemplation, learning, fun, and growth that occurred in small or large increments throughout the day will surely accompany the memories of the first Flippin' the Script conference.

Holleran Center   PICA Sophomores   New London Community

NEW LONDON 9TH ANNUAL WALK TO END HOMELESSNESS

by **Veronica Alejandro '18**

I am a Connecticut College Holleran Center (PICA) scholar. This semester I had the opportunity to participate in the PICA gateway course on public policy and community action which provided me an opportunity to spend time at the New London Homeless Hospitality Center (NLHHC). I worked with some of my other PICA classmates, and some students from two other courses, in order to help plan and organize the Walk to End Homelessness. Through this event we were able to bring awareness to both the New London and Conn campus community about homelessness. People who attended the event were able to get some food, interact with one another, and hear the walk's speakers – President Bergeron from Connecticut College, Mayor Passero of New London, and Cathy Zall the Executive Director of the NLHHC – before the walk began. Walkers traveled on a two-mile path that consisted of three interactive stops, where walkers read information about homelessness, information provided by guests at the NLHHC. They also answered questions as to why they participated. The walk was an amazing opportunity that I am honored to have been part of this semester.

In the future I hope to continue working on my own PICA project topic revolving mental health in the Mexican community. I believe that working at the NLHHC, where many of the guests are Latino, gives me an insight as to how the culture can play a big role in an individual. I understand, coming from a Mexican background myself, that it is not easy to accept the concept of mental illness; therefore, I would like to fight the stigma that is attached to mental health, particularly in the culture where I am so closely connected.

What I like best about the Holleran Center PICA program is the sense of community. We begin the application process by being connected to a PICA student advisor and faculty advisor. Once in the program, PICA scholars work together and support one another. To the students who are applying for PICA this coming semester, I would like to say that one thing to do is reach out to any PICA scholars you know because PICA is a community and you will receive any type of support that you need throughout the application process.



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ENRICH MENTOR PROGRAM



by Maggie Corey '18

I just finished my second year at Connecticut College. I am pursuing a major in American Studies, and a certificate from the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. I grew up in a small town in Massachusetts called Pepperell, and I still live there with my parents and my two younger brothers when I am not at school. A major factor in my decision to attend a small liberal arts college came from my love of people and working with others. I enjoy getting to know people on a personal level, and a small campus where everyone knows one another seemed like the perfect venue for that.

For the past five summers, I have worked as a waitress in a local restaurant that also makes and serves ice cream. This opportunity has allowed me to interact with a huge variety of different people over the years, and I have learned so many skills from this job. Similarly, working with New London Bennie Dover Jackson middle school students has been my favorite part of my PICA journey thus far. I have yet to discover anything as exciting as when making connections with people, and my experience this past semester as a mentor in the ENRICH program allowed me to do just that. ENRICH is a partnership between Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School and the Connecticut College Office of Volunteers for Community Service (OVCS). The goal of this partnership is to provide free after-school programs to middle schoolers with a focus on exposing them to the college environment.

As far as the future is concerned, I have no idea what I want to do with my life, except to leave the world a little better than I found it. My professors, advisors, mentors, and every other influential adult in my life have assured me countless times that I will figure out my path eventually, and that it is okay not to know exactly what I want to do. This is the advice I would give to PICA student applicants; even a broad idea of what you want to study or what area of interest you might want to pursue is enough to be successful in the early years of your college career.

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EXPANDED LEARNING TIME PROGRAM

by Hanako Brais '18

As an Anthropology major, I have always been fascinated by people, culture, and identity. When I encountered scholarship on oppression and social justice during my first year, I knew that that was the type of academic thinking I would want to pursue. When I heard about PICA, I was extremely excited because PICA would allow me to connect my academics to action and experience. During my first year with PICA, I have been exposed to critical thinking about what it means to take action in order to pragmatically start addressing social issues.

My current PICA area of interest is education disparity in the United States, focusing specifically on the lack of access to high quality arts education for marginalized groups. This summer, I will be working as an intern for the Center for Collaborative Education, an education research non-profit in Boston that focuses on education equity, particularly for historically underserved groups. My community placement experience through PICA has given me a first hand experience of a group of students that education policy effects. While working on policy research, I plan to make a conscious effort to remember that public policy has the power of directly impacting individuals.

As a Sophomore PICA scholar, I completed my community partnership project with the Expanded Learning Time (ELT) program at C.B. Jennings Elementary School through OVCS. Along with five of my peers, I participated as a mentor to second grade students who worked on concepts in the subjects of math and science. Working with peers who are equally as committed to social change shaped my experience with ELT. In class, we learned the importance of communication and reflection as part of community action. These ideas translated to our group dynamic. We pushed each other to make our time with ELT a reflective, reciprocal, and meaningful experience, not only just within our group, but with our team leader, OVCS, and Jennings. It was extremely rewarding when we were greeted by the second graders with warm smiles and excitement as we worked to get to know each student individually. This helped us work effectively in the classroom and created an engaging atmosphere where we were able to focus on each student. As a result, we found the students to be more receptive and our activities to be more meaningful. Without the framework that our PICA Gateway Course provided, as well as the commitment and energy that my group members brought to ELT, my experience with ELT wouldn't have been the growing experience that it was.

I have learned that public policy is complex and that community action takes a lot of conscious effort. I am still unsure where exactly my PICA journey will take me. However, I hope to continue learning and growing to be an effective and meaningful social change agent through examining social injustices and partaking in community action.



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SAGES AND SEEKERS

By Kali Guise '18

As a Center with a strong focus on social justice, the Holleran Center not only allows for its scholars to explore their own area of interest that falls under this umbrella of activism, but pushes us to explore issues impacting the local New London community that we might not have participated in had we not been in PICA.

Through the Gateway Course, I – along with six of my fellow PICA scholars – participated in the Sages and Seekers program. It was introduced to Connecticut College by PICA scholar Alek Chandra '16 and aims to foster intergenerational connections. This program was implemented at the New London Senior Center, where over the course of the semester we developed strong bonds with a group of seniors through conversation, sharing photos and stories, playing games, and dancing, to name only a few of the activities.

This program cumulated in the Senior Citizens Prom which was organized by the PICA students and brought together seniors from the New London community, students, faculty/staff, and officials from the community. Planning the Senior Prom taught us many practical skills such as budgeting, working with caterers, and managing RSVPs, but it also taught us to think through issues such as the accessibility of our event so we could ensure that all seniors of all abilities would be able to experience and enjoy the Prom. Yet while we gained a lot of organizing skills, what we most gained was seeing the manifestation of the Prom itself. Our goal was to give the seniors a space where they could enjoy themselves and not only connect with each other, but with other generations from different parts of the community.

I look forward to applying what I have learned from my time at the Senior Center to my own PICA area of interest of exploring ecofeminism and connecting animal rights to human rights. I have made connections across the board of social justice issues just through the guidance of the PICA Gateway Course, so I know that I will only continue to make more intersectional connections and grow both as scholar and an activist with my time spent in the Holleran Center.



LIFE ABROAD: PICA JUNIORS TALK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES



By Shameesha Pryor '17

Currently, I am waiting to hear back from Howard University's School of Law summer program. I have begun my research for my PICA Senior Integrative Project independent study for senior year. I plan to research rehabilitation and policies for juveniles and children who are victims of abuse and neglect. I am a selected student ambassador for the Umbra Institute in Perugia, Italy. Also, I have just been published in a press release for the Umbra.org.

My plan for the future includes opening a non-profit organization aimed to heal and help youth in urban and neglected communities, encouraging them to achieve their full potential; ideally through performance arts. Also, I plan to enroll in a law school and receive my J.D with a concentration on abused and neglected children.

PICA has influenced me to follow my passion even if the road gets hard. I have overcome many challenges throughout my educational journey and PICA makes it all worth it. Learning that there are others who are just as dedicated to change the world we live in for a more global and equitable community is an amazing feeling.

My favorite part of being a PICA scholar is knowing that I am impacting lives of various people who have and will impact mine as well. The reciprocal relationship is unique and fulfilling. Another wonderful part of PICA is the network, partnerships, and the diverse group of individuals and topics of interest. It is rewarding to be surrounded by such a wonderful and intellectual group of my generation.

Fellow PICA scholars, follow your heart and pursue an interest in something that makes you eager and hungry to gain more knowledge. Invest in the little things because sometimes its the most valuable experience.



LIFE ABROAD: PICA JUNIORS TALK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES



By Eilis Klein '17

Ellen Babbott '17 and I met and became best friends in PICA. Now we are in Australia together! The people are unbelievably nice, the city (of Sydney) is the prettiest place I have ever been, and the mindset is laid-back and positive.

My favorite thing about PICA is that it allows you to have a huge worldview. My advice to PICA sophomores is to take advantage of the amazingness PICA has to offer. Go to every event because you will hear the most inspiring stories, any of which could change your life forever. Go to class with an open mind, because your classmates will inspire you and challenge you with thoughts and ideas that make you realize the incredible intelligence you are surrounded by. And dream big!

PICA is something that other undergrads don't get to do – the Holleran Center has faith in your abilities to handle it and to change the world so you need to believe in yourself as well! You are smarter than you think and you need to share your ideas because when we all put our best foot forwards and work really hard, the world will change.



LIFE ABROAD: PICA JUNIORS TALK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES



By Ellen Babbott '17

This summer, I will be a unit head at an all-girls sleep away summer camp in Vermont. This summer camp helps girls learn resiliency skills, take risks, and build relationships, all within nature and without any technology. Working with this age group sets me up beautifully to start student teaching in the fall at Integrated Day Charter School in Norwich, CT. After graduation, I hope to be an elementary school teacher and eventually help write policy that seeks more equitable solutions for all students and their school communities. PICA really tied all of my interests together: I am a Human Development major, an education certification student, and a camp counselor, so my interest of conflict resolution and school discipline policies were really drawn together nicely.

The best advice I can give mirrors Eilis's: go to all the events!! Eilis and I got way closer after we attended a panel sophomore year and then talked afterwards. The Holleran Center is especially incredible because it provides an amazing network of people who are all striving to make a positive change in our New London community and beyond — students, staff, professors, and community members alike. I feel lucky to be part of such a collaborative, intelligent, and fun-loving group of student-activists. I would also recommend getting to know your fellow PICA students— the seniors have been through everything and are so kind and willing to give stellar advice. And finally, sophomores: take advantage of the great support you are receiving from the Holleran Center and run with it. I guarantee they'll run with you!



SENIOR INTEGRATIVE PROJECTS

AN INFLUENTIAL JOURNEY

By Bianca Lopez '16

This semester, I completed my Senior PICA integrative project as an honors thesis in the human development department. I examined different scopes of resiliency through interviewing students of color at Connecticut College. I was interested in how students of color can succeed in a predominantly white, privileged community. I found that while there is no one formula to remain resilient, there are definitely support systems that can be implemented to make similar college communities more welcoming for students of color. In continuing my efforts in working with underserved populations, I will be volunteering in Chile for four months teaching English to students from low-income backgrounds.

I definitely believe PICA made me want to expand my engagement to a global level. I was not able to study abroad and after seeing how much my peers grew from that experience, I wanted to try my hand at living abroad while volunteering. I think PICA has allowed me to challenge myself personally and academically. While as a sophomore I had no intention of writing an honors thesis, during the end of my junior year, I realized I wanted to use my SIP to bring light to the voices that are not often heard. It also allowed for some self-reflection, as I am a student of color from a low-income background. I think the only advice I have for underclassmen is to definitely expand your horizons - study away, seek out internships, and definitely keep in touch with PICA alumni as we are all here to support you!



SENIOR INTEGRATIVE PROJECTS

THE CUT FLOWER INDUSTRY



By Julia Hayden '16

I am so grateful to have had the many opportunities PICA fostered throughout my time at Conn. Entering college, I knew that I wanted to major in Environmental Studies but I had not fully understood why this topic is so important to me. As I learned about the social implications that are caused by environmental degradation, I began focusing on public health and policies, which led me to apply to PICA and learn more about the intersections between environmental studies, public policy, and community action.

My PICA classmates, as well as the Holleran Center staff and faculty, helped me to develop my senior integrative research project studying injustices within the cut flower industry as well as my goals for the future. In learning about the cut flower industry I was able to see how complicated the relationship is between the consumptive demands in the United States and the positive and negative affects these have on other countries. In this case, Colombia and Ecuador benefit from this market but the environment and workers suffer due to exorbitant use of highly toxic chemicals, lack of regulations, and no incentive to follow those that do exist. After pursuing my Senior Integrative Project and learning about the injustices embedded within the issues my PICA classmates chose to tackle, I am motivated to use my education and these perspectives to help advance some of the countless changes for which we all need to take responsibility.

In exploring opportunities for the year ahead, I am looking into traveling to South America or Southeast Asia to work or volunteer for a local organization that focuses on one of the many environmental justice issues I have learned about in my classes. I am also considering opportunities offered by AmeriCorps or similar organizations based here in the United States, as there is so much work to be done on environmental justice in this country.

The Holleran Center has offered opportunities for engagement with so many inspirational people, prompted me to volunteer for several organizations with diverse platforms, and helped me shape my interests. It is my hope that underclassman participating in PICA take advantage of the numerous opportunities that PICA offers. My advice for sophomores in particular is not to be concerned if their senior project ideas are still evolving. Through this brainstorming process, continuous learning, and increasing awareness about world issues, each student creates enlightening and meaningful projects. Although I am saying goodbye to the Connecticut College campus, I know that the people who I've met here, especially those within the PICA community, will continue to teach, inspire, and motivate me to keep fighting against injustices in our world.

AWARDS

The Holleran Center would like to congratulate all of their PICA scholars who have received various Honors and Awards. These recognitions appropriately reflect the endless hours and effort that you have invested throughout your years at Conn. The Center is very proud!

KATE ADAMS '16

HOLLERAN CENTER ACTIVIST SCHOLAR AWARD
MRS. ELIZABETH FIELDING MEMORIAL AWARD

MATTIE BARBER-BOCKELMAN '16

THEATER & ADVOCACY AWARD

ELLEN BABBOTT '17

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT LOUISE LACEY MCGARRY
AWARD

ALEKSANDR CHANDRA '16

HOLLERAN CENTER COMMUNITY ACTIVISM
AWARD

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT PRIZE

ELIZABETH Y. DURANTE '10 MEMORIAL AWARD
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

PHI BETA KAPPA

ANNETTE DAVIS '18

PROJECTS FOR PEACE GRANTS RECIPIENT

GRACE FINLEY '16

PHI BETA KAPPA

GRACE MARI HALL '16

SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT PRIZE

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY AWARD

PHI BETA KAPPA

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

JULIA HAYDEN '16

SALLY L. TAYLOR PRIZE

ESTEFANI IGNACIO GALLEGOS '16

BARBARA E. GURWITZ '88 MEMORIAL AWARD

HOLLERAN CENTER ELIZABETH DURANTE
ACTIVIST AWARD

TARYN KITCHEN '16

CHARLES "BUD" CHURCH TEACHING AWARD FOR
SOCIAL JUSTICE

DORIS MEYER SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVICE AWARD

ROSEMARY PARK FELLOWSHIP FOR TEACHING

FULBRIGHT ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP
TO MEXICO

PHI BETA KAPPA

ANNA LORD STRAUSS AWARD

SUSANNA MATHEWS '16

GOVERNMENT & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
DEPARTMENT PRIZE

KHUSHBU PANDYA '16

HOLLERAN CENTER ELIZABETH DURANTE
ACTIVIST AWARD

DR. JOSEPH NUNES PEREIRA MEMORIAL PRIZE

PHI BETA KAPPA

DENISE PEREZ '18

RUBY JO REEVES KENNEDY MEMORIAL AWARD

SOPHIE SHARPS '16

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY AWARD

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

PHI BETA KAPPA

CHAKENA SIMS '16

HARRIET BUESCHER LAWRENCE '34 PRIZE

POSSE SCHOLAR

ELECTED CONNECTICUT COLLEGE YOUNG ALUMNI

ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

ALUMNA SHARES HER POST- COLLEGE EXPERIENCES



By Heather Munro '08

As a Holleran Center PICA alumna, I think I have always questioned my relevancy to public policy as an academic where it is more difficult to see the impact upon humans, the potential to change for good. Indeed, an entire area of professional ethics in my field, anthropology, has been devoted to the question of whether or not we can or should be part of community action, or have influence on public policy concerning our research. But what is the fundamental purpose of my research, if not to expand knowledge? Should not our policy makers and organizers be well informed? We are not, as academics, disconnected from and irrelevant to the world. Rather, we are necessarily part of

the greater context in which our research exists, and must engage with the world to broaden minds and create change. My anthropological research is conducted in Jerusalem, with Chasidic women. Chasidic people are devoutly religious Jews, who are generally distinguished from other Jews by their tradition to follow the teachings of a specific great rabbi, called a rebbe. There are hundreds of different groups of Chasidic Jews, and the diversity within their world can be impressive. My work focuses on femininity in Chasidic society and thought, and specifically on feminine power and social change. Chasidic society seeks to remain separate from the rest of the world; information from and contact with the outside world is tightly controlled. Conducting such cerebral research in such a cloistered environment could easily have led me to believe that my work existed in a vacuum, and held no import for the world beyond the bubbles of academia and Chasidism.

Events during the summer of my master's fieldwork transpired to prove just how wrong that assumption could be. Nearly every day, at least one story would surface in national news at which Chasidic or ultra-orthodox women were the heart. Women of the Wall, a group that seeks to hold all-female prayer services at the Western Wall, were in conflict with the mandates of the more religious authority that controls the prayer area. Women and girls from the communities in which I conducted research were used as physical impediments to the perceived modernizing influence of Women of the Wall, filling the Western Wall area so that the group could not enter. Politicians and organizers speculated that 'these women', meaning the women whom I study, didn't even know enough to understand what they were fighting against.

Violence erupted. Men in the communities where I conduct research spit on or threw stones at women and girls who were dressed modestly. Politicians came under unprecedented pressure to force these communities to no longer be exempt from mandatory military service. Chasidic groups generally do not serve in the IDF because they perceive the existence of a Jewish state in Israel as blocking the coming of the messiah. They resist any participation in what they see as the Zionist project, including continuing to speak Yiddish instead of adopting Modern Hebrew. A law was passed ending the exemptions, and Chasidic men, in theory, will be forced to serve in the IDF starting this year.



Other political debates arose surrounding Chasidic women. Do they receive a sufficient education? Are they truly given choice in marriage, or are matches forced? Are the authorities in the community covering up crimes, like sexual assault? Religious women are the subject of huge debates throughout Israeli society today, but rarely, if ever, do we hear their voices as part of the conversation.

As an academic, and especially as an anthropologist, I have a responsibility to present my research ethically and honestly. I am obligated to examine my own internal biases and assumptions. My professional code binds me to a form of honest reporting that women in these communities rarely receive. When I started my research, I expected resistance, suspicion, and outright rejection. Instead, Chasidic women couldn't wait to tell me their stories and let their voices be heard. So far, only two women have refused to participate: one had just had a baby, and the other was seriously ill. Chasidic women are clamoring to be heard.

And so I hope that my research does have an impact on the policy makers and women's organizers of Israel. There is such ignorance about the religious world, that it has bred an atmosphere of distrust, suspicion, and even hatred on both sides. I hope my research becomes a guide for a path forward with better understanding, dialogue, and culturally informed policy making.

Back in 2009, Prof. Barbara Nussbaum spoke about liberal education and democratic citizenship at Conn's 91st commencement. She hearkened to Socrates, saying that our liberal arts education has given us the capacity for critical examination, 'waking democracy up so that it could conduct its business in a more reflective way'. A liberal education, she proposes, is the way in which to build inquisitive, critically thoughtful citizens to engage in our democratic project. I would argue that it is the role of academics to continue that process with policy makers and social activists. The critical examination must constantly continue, and lawmakers and shapers of the future must be engaged with independent thought and reflective analysis. Rather than being removed from the world of public policy and community action, the academic is central to its success.

Nussbaum, Martha, "91st Commencement Address: "Not for Profit: Liberal Education and Democratic Citizenship"" (2009). Commencement Addresses. Paper 18.

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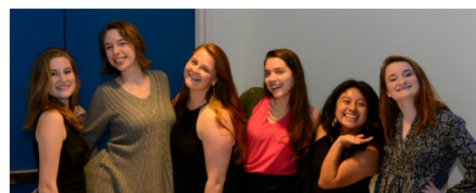
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