

# The Diversity and Social Justice Project

## NEWSLETTER

## FALL 2009

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**T**he Diversity And Social Justice Project offers an open forum for all members of the Hamilton Community to examine, discuss, address or create connections around issues of social justice and diversity, as they manifest themselves both on and off campus. The Project promotes rigorous interdisciplinary intellectual exchanges characteristic of a liberal education through a variety of activities concerning issues of social justice and diversity.

Each year we choose a topic and organize a series of speakers and events. This year our topic is "Citizenship," and we look forward to suggestions for our spring programming.

The DSJP office is in McEwen 101, where you will find our Administrative Assistant, Janet Turvey. She can also be reached at x4288 or [jturvey@hamilton.edu](mailto:jturvey@hamilton.edu)

For more details on our Mission, see our Web site: [www.hamilton.edu/college/dsjp](http://www.hamilton.edu/college/dsjp).

### Introduction to the Executive Committee

**Naomi Guttman**, Director  
Associate Professor of English, Naomi Guttman joined the faculty in 1996. Naomi has published two books of poems and a variety of articles. Her pedagogical interests include contemporary poetry, food studies, and contemplative practice in creativity and education. In 2003, with a group of colleagues, she pioneered the Food for Thought seminar, and since 2007 she has been a co-leader of the Central Leatherstocking chapter of Slow Food, an international organization that promotes good, clean, and fair food for all.

Professor of French **Martine Guyot-Bender** has been teaching French language and twentieth- and twenty first- century literatures and cultures at Hamilton since 1991. Her early research concerned representations of war in literature and other media; recently, she has begun studying grass roots social film documentary in France. She will be pursuing

that research in France during her sabbatical in spring 2010. Her upper level courses on contemporary France and on the representation of war take a multidisciplinary approach, making great use of current social issues and representation through internet sources. However, she also enjoys teaching the nuts and bolts of the French language through textbooks that take into account the cultural, social and linguistic diversity of France.

**Chad Williams** is an assistant professor in the History Department. He received his BA from UCLA and his PhD from Princeton University. Chad joined the faculty of Hamilton College in 2004 and teaches various courses in United States and African American History. His research interests include African American military service, World War I, African American intellectual history, and social and political movements across the African diaspora. His first book, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers and the Era of the First World War*, will be published by University of North Carolina Press in 2010. In addition to his participation in the DSJP, Chad currently serves as advisor to the Black-Latino Student Union.

Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, **Angela Cannarelli Peck**, is in her third year at Hamilton. Her research examines Muslims' literary production during the Spanish Inquisition as well as philosophy and mysticism as spaces for medieval and early modern inter-confessional exchanges. She is currently working on a book project that examines Muslim and Christian entwinement in early modern Spain, as depicted by Christian and Muslim authors. Her hobbies include cooking, swimming, hiking and trout fishing. She is part of the DSJP in order to raise awareness regarding issues of social injustice past and present at Hamilton and beyond.

**Angel David Nieves** is Associate Professor of Africana Studies. He joined the faculty in 2008. His co-edited book, *"We shall Independent Be: African American Place-Making and the Struggle to Claim Space in the U.S." (2008)*, examines African American efforts to claim space in American society despite fierce resistance. He recently completed a second book manuscript, *"We Gave Our Hearts &*

*Lives To It,*” on the race-uplift work of African American women reformers in the post-Reconstruction South. Nieves’ scholarly work and community-based activism critically engages with issues of memory, heritage preservation, gender, and nationalism at the intersections of race and the built environment in cities across the Global South from New Orleans to Johannesburg, South Africa.

Assistant Professor of Hispanic Studies, **Jessica Burke** specializes in Latin American literature and cultures, with a special emphasis on Mexico and gender studies. Jessica’s current research explores the body in transition in the narrative work of contemporary Mexican author Carmen Boullosa. Jessica is the faculty advisor of both Spanish Club and a student-led meditation group.

**Carolyn Carpan** is the Director of Public Services in the Hamilton College Library. In her previous position, Carolyn was a Reference Librarian and Associate Professor at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. She holds a Master of Library and Information Studies degree from Dalhousie University in her hometown of Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she was also the first graduate of the undergraduate Women’s Studies Program. Carolyn has a M.A. in Women’s Studies from the Memorial University of Newfoundland, and is the author of several books, including *Rocked by Romance: A Guide to Teen Romance Fiction* Jane Yolen, and *Sisters, Schoolgirls, and Sleuths: Girls’ Series Books in America*. She has a lifelong interest in women’s, diversity, and social justice issues.

**Nigel D. Westmaas** is Assistant Professor of Africana Studies. A Guyanese academic and political activist currently living in the United States, he received his MA and PhD in sociology from Binghamton University. Research interests include social movements, especially in the Caribbean and third world; history of the newspaper press; Africana biography (he has written and contributed to studies on the impact of Marcus Garvey in the former British Guiana). He is also interested in the content and state of archival resources in the Caribbean. Nigel is currently on leave, working on a book on political movements in Guyana.

## Summer Service Associates

Each summer, The Diversity and Social Justice Project, with matching funds from the Kirkland Endowment, gives up to three grants of \$3000 each to support Hamilton College students with demonstrated financial need who wish to engage in unpaid socially useful work. The work must cover a ten-week period over the course of the summer and be in the service of a single organization. Seniors and students without a valid social security number are not eligible to apply. Below are reflections by the two Summer Service Associates from 2009.

Applications for the summer of 2010 will be due March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. For application forms and information contact Janet Turvey, Administrative Assistant, x4288 or [jturvey@hamilton.edu](mailto:jturvey@hamilton.edu).

### **Sarah Goodell ’11, 2009 Summer Service Associate**

This summer I was an intern at the Advocates for Human Rights in Minneapolis, MN. The Advocates for Human Rights (AHR), is a nonprofit organization that works to create international human rights standards that promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law. They do this by involving volunteers in research, education and advocacy. AHR also provides investigative fact finding, direct legal representation, partnership for education and training, and a broad distribution of publications. Using a wide range of innovative programs, AHR promotes and protects human rights around the world. Thousands of people from various fields and professions have volunteered their time to help AHR produce 81 reports documenting human rights practices in 22 countries.

I interned in the Women’s Program and worked on a variety of projects over the past few months. My biggest project was researching and writing a page for the Women’s Program’s website (Stop Violence Against Women, [stopvaw.org](http://stopvaw.org)) on dating violence among teens. I finished the page in mid-July and it is now displayed under the Domestic Violence section of the site. I wrote weekly articles for the What’s New section of the website which summarized reports, press releases, new legislation, conferences, and resolutions concerning violence against women worldwide.

With the other interns in the Women's Program, I compiled a database of tools and organizations related to legislation on violence against women. This will be part of a knowledge asset the Women's Program is creating for the United Nations Development Fund for Women. To update the stalking page on the website I researched stalking and cyberstalking. In addition, I helped to organize a celebration for the passage of a Minnesota sex-trafficking bill on which AHR worked, which was passed in May.

As an integral part of the staff, I attended weekly meetings and brown bag lunches designed to teach interns about the organization's different programs. I also had the opportunity to work at the organization's biggest fundraiser of the year, the Human Rights Awards Dinner, and, later in the summer, to visit a Domestic Violence/Family court where I observed the proceedings. Over the course of the summer, I learned about different forms of gender-based violence around the world and the laws that are created to end violence against women and girls. Not only did my internship at the Advocates for Human Rights teach me how a nonprofit organization operates, it expanded my understanding of human rights and has sparked my interest in women's rights here and around the world.

### **Sujitha Amalanayagam '10 2009 Summer Service Associate**

For two months, I volunteered with *Traveller not Tourist* (TNT) teaching English at the Flora Tristan School: The Magical World of English located near Arequipa, Peru. The school is in Villa Chachani, one of the poorest towns in Peru, forty five minutes away from Arequipa. TNT is a non-profit organization whose main goal is to provide foreigners visiting Peru a chance to offer their services and use their skills to benefit the people in the community.

The Flora Tristan School attempts to provide Peruvians with the chance to better themselves in society and build their future. It is actively involved in the neighborhood, providing a safe environment where the children can learn English and thrive socially and intellectually. English is the only subject taught at the school because, given the immense number of tourists that visit Peru, it is a marketable skill. The hope is that these children can use English to find jobs in the tourism industry.

For most of my time in Peru, I worked with Oscar, a delightful student who has epilepsy and learning disabilities. Although he is fourteen years old, Oscar cannot tell you his age, nor can he be easily taught to read or write for he has the mental capacity of a three year old. Working with Oscar became my biggest project and challenge.

With no formal teaching experience, I had to be creative with my lessons plan and craft activities. I was able to work individually with Oscar and learn his weaknesses and strengths; eventually I discovered what worked for him. Using repetitive writing exercises and speaking to him with the little Spanish I knew, was able to teach him the names of animals, to identify colors and national flags.

My experience with Oscar taught me to be patient because it was easy to get frustrated when he did not remember a word I just taught him. But I realized that he has to live like this for the rest of his life and he also gets frustrated. To live in a country where there is extreme poverty is difficult, but to live in a country that offers no opportunity for persons with disability is tragic. Despite the hardships, Oscar is always so full of life and loves to meet new people. Oscar became the highlight of my experience and I was lucky to have worked with such an inspiring person. I now understand how rewarding teaching can be.

As a member of the organization, I attended weekly meetings during which we planned fun activities for the children and discussed how to improve the school. At the conclusion of my volunteer experience, I returned to my familiar world characterized by clean water, electricity and air conditioning, but life remains the same for the kids of Flora Tristan.

Through TNT, I had the opportunity to make a small change in the lives of these children and explore the Peruvian culture. Teaching English may have been a small contribution, but it was a big step toward following the principle of Gandhi: becoming the change I desire to see in the world. This experience further motivates me to achieve my future goals and aspirations to provide opportunities for children with the willingness to learn. I plan to take Spanish and return to Peru to visit friends I made at the school and to be a patron of future projects. Such experiences give meaning to the human condition, creating a positive effect for all of humanity, which is my motto in life.

## Fall 2009: Citizenship Series

DSJP's topic for this academic year is "Citizenship." On September 9<sup>th</sup> the project hosted a panel and discussion moderated by Martine Guyot-Bender, *Coming to America: Citizens Here and There*, where Hamilton faculty from other countries recounted their experiences in the USA.

September 11<sup>th</sup>, John Fife, retired Presbyterian minister and social Activist lectured on *Civil Initiative: Organizing for Social Change*.

Here is the remainder of our fall series:

**Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Science Center G027**

**R. Dwayne Betts**

*Notes About Freckled Faced Gerald*

**Sponsored by College 130**

**Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 4:15 p.m.**  
**Dwight Lounge**

**Sylvia de Swaan, Photographer**

*Return: A Slide Talk About a Quest  
for Identity and Roots*

**Co-sponsored with The Emerson Gallery**

**Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 p.m. Chapel**

**Kamila Shamsie, award-winning novelist**

will read from her latest novel,

*Burnt Shadows*

**Sponsored by the English Department**

**Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 p.m. SC G027**

**Melissa Harris Lacewell, Associate Professor of Politics  
and African American Studies, Princeton University**

*Rethinking Race and Citizenship  
in the Age of Obama*

**Hosted by Africana Studies**

## College 130 Returns

By Steve Orvis

After a hiatus of 5 years, College 130: Coming of Age in America has returned to the curriculum this fall. The course was created about a decade ago by members of the Kirkland Project to provide a first-semester, interdisciplinary course that examines issues of difference and identity. This fall, the course has four sections taught by Steve Orvis, Esther Kanipe, Shelley Haley, and Joyce Barry. All sections follow a common syllabus and meet together on Friday afternoons for common activities such as watching films and hosting guest speakers. Funding for TAs and books comes from the Dean of Faculty office and the Menges fund.

The goals of the course include not only learning about coming of age and the various categories of difference we examine, but also helping students learn how to talk about difficult subjects such as race and sexual identity in an open, honest, and respectful way. By having as many as 80 first-semester students go through this course, we hope it can have an impact on not only them but broader campus discussions of these issues as the students subsequently become campus leaders. The course will conclude with a group project assignment in which students pick a relevant topic of their choice and plan (but not carry out, at least not within the confines of the course) a social activism project. This requires them to engage in fundamental aspects of citizenship, such as deciding what problem they care enough about to try to effect positively, working with others to hammer out a common position on that issue, and determining a realistic strategy through which they can find a resolution to the problem.

Another highlight of the course is the guest speakers that we bring to campus. This semester, we have invited Dwayne Betts, poet and author of a memoir that we are reading in the course, *A Question of Freedom*. The book recounts his experience of coming of age in prison after being sentenced at age 16 to nine years in adult prisons in Virginia. He will give a public lecture on Thursday, October 1 at 7:00 p.m. and will speak with our class the following day, Oct. 2, at 1 p.m. in K.J. Auditorium.

Each section of the course includes a teaching assistant, a paid position (funded by the Dean of the Faculty) that provides teaching experience to older students who are knowledgeable about issues of difference and identity. They help faculty lead weekly discussions, meet with students to work on papers and other projects outside of class, and plan and lead some of the Friday discussions of the entire group. Our TAs for this year are Leide Cabral '10, Sakhile Matlhare '10, Sushmita Preetha '11, Stephanie Tafur '10, and Mica Warton '10.

## Community Fora

The Offices of the Dean of Students and the Dean of the Faculty have organized a series of community fora to promote campus-wide discussions on difficult issues.

On Sept. 19th, they hosted a forum on Citizenship at Hamilton, co-sponsored by the DSJP.

On Oct. 9th, Tim Wise, a well-known anti-racism writer and activist, will speak in the Chapel on Power and Privilege, 12-1:30 p.m.

On Nov. 13th, the topic will be about the possibility of a social honor code. Place TBA, 12-1:30. For more information contact Dean Allen Harrison or Dean Steve Yao.

## DSJP Coffee Hours

DSJP will be hosting several coffee hours in Azel Backus House. The first one, co-hosted with the Cultural Education Center will be on September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:15 p.m.

Future coffee hours will be held on: October 14<sup>th</sup>, October 28<sup>th</sup>, November 11<sup>th</sup> and December 9<sup>th</sup>.

## Social Justice Conference

On Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, the DSJP held the third annual conference of student work on Social Justice. The following students presented their summer projects.

**Sujitha Amalanavagam '10**, a DSJP Service Associate, talked about her work teaching English at The Flora Tristan School near Arequipa, Peru.

Kirkland Endowment Summer Research Associate **Selena Carrion '10** presented her biographical research on the contributions of women activists in South Africa's anti-apartheid movement.

**Sarah Goodell '11**, a DSJP Service Associate, presented her work with the Advocates for Human Rights, based in Minneapolis, where she interned in the Women's Division.

Emerson Grant recipient **Juancho Hurtado '11** presented his work at Teatro Taller de Colombia, one of the oldest street theatre groups in that nation. Juan taught traditional theater techniques to low-income children.

**Sushmita Preetha '11**, a Kirkland Endowment Summer Research Associate presented her research on the social and economic costs of NGO activism in Bangladesh.

**Amy Tannenbaum '10**, a Bristol Research Grant recipient, spoke about her research on the history and theory of performance art, in particular on the ways women have used performance art in pursuit of social change.

## Critical Engagement with Social Justice

The Executive Committee of DSJP has been discussing how to encourage our membership to engage in scholarly debate and critical inquiry around those issues of social justice that affect our diverse communities. Even though we find ourselves face to face at a small liberal arts college, few of us have detailed knowledge of our colleagues' research or the myriad issues they face in their scholarly and/or activist work. We invite the campus community to submit short personal essays detailing how social justice has shaped their work or changed their lives. The submissions should not exceed 500 words. The deadline for the next newsletter is December 1, 2009. Please send your submissions as attached Word documents to Angel David Nieves at [anieves@hamilton.edu](mailto:anieves@hamilton.edu). If you have any questions, please e-mail me at the same address.

## The Diversity and Social Justice Project



# Hamilton

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### Contact Us!

Do you have a suggestion or idea for us to consider? Would you like to be a member and join our listserv? We would like to hear from you. Telephone us at 315-859-4288. Send email to [jturvey@hamilton.edu](mailto:jturvey@hamilton.edu). Or visit our web site [www.hamilton.edu/college/dsjp](http://www.hamilton.edu/college/dsjp) and click on "Contact Us."