ON THE COVER


Photo by Vesna Pavlovic.
Article on page 25.
All we need is peace

The theme of this edition of the Schepp Connections is peace—a subject that is on everyone’s mind these days as we are forced to confront and live with senseless violence and war on so many fronts.

As you will see when you read their stories, our Schepp Scholars, unlike many, do not simply sit around and bemoan the situation or complain about longer check-in times at airports. They are out in the trenches around the world, making incredible personal sacrifices to help others improve their lives and learn to understand the true meaning of peace.

Their courage, commitment, grace, endurance and idealism are powerful examples for all of us.
Update on Career Connections, our new Mentoring Program

You may recall that in the last Schepp Connections, we told you about our plans for a mentoring program to put Schepp Scholars who are launching their careers in touch with former Schepp Scholars already established in similar careers and therefore in a position to provide advice, contacts, and general wisdom.

To get Career Connections off the ground, we decided to match incoming 2006-07 scholars with former scholars. Edward Grombley, himself a former Schepp Scholar, has been instrumental in helping us get the program up and running. His suggestions, enthusiasm, and willingness to give up a weekend got us all energized. On August 12, 2006, Edward, along with Barbara McLendon, President of the Foundation, and Suzanne Clair Guard, our Executive Director, spent the day calling former scholars to gauge their willingness to mentor new scholars. Approximately 20 matches were made on that day alone and we will continue to make more throughout the year.

Here are some of the Connections that have been made to date:

- A former Fulbright Scholar conducting research in Morocco with a scholar in the Masters in Public Policy Program at the Kennedy School of Government
- An accomplished tenured professor of art with a scholar working towards a Masters in Art at the Art Institute of Boston

We have already received positive feedback from both the mentors and their matches and are very optimistic about the future of the program. We encourage any of you who might be interested in participating to contact us, either by phone at 212 692 0191 or email at www.information@scheppfoundation.org. We have so many phenomenal current and former scholars that the connections are bound to be hugely beneficial.
Applying the Lessons of War to Achieve a Lasting Peace

By Laurel Severns Guntzel

I traveled to Iraq in the summer of 2001 on a humanitarian mission, three months before the 9/11 attacks. By 2001, Iraq had endured a ten-year war with Iran, a devastating and comprehensive American bombardment in 1991, and ten years of economic sanctions, which had destroyed the country’s economy and its civilian infrastructure.

At that time, Iraq was rarely in the news. I was there as a volunteer for Voices in the Wilderness, a campaign nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize, which worked to educate Americans about the effects of American policy on the Iraqi people and, ultimately, to end the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq.

I visited with a delegation that recorded the stories of everyday Iraqis whose lives had been severely impacted by war and sanctions while their dictator thrived. The economic sanctions blocked key medicines and water treatment equipment, some of which could theoretically have been used by Saddam Hussein to create weapons of mass destruction. But in 1996, UNICEF reported that this forced deprivation had contributed to the deaths of as many as a half a million Iraqi children under age five—mostly due to a deadly combination of malnutrition and parasite-infested drinking water.

We arrived with suitcases full of medicine, prenatal vitamins, aspirin, and recent medical journals, which we donated to hospitals and friends we met along the way. Our contribution hardly registered in a country with such great need; ours was a gesture of goodwill, an attempt to communicate America’s compassion to a country that had only known its retribution.
I was inspired by the great strength of spirit I found in many Iraqis I met, but it was a terribly sad visit. A dreadful feeling of irony takes hold of me now as I recall how we thought then that the conditions in Iraq couldn’t get any worse.

My visit to Iraq fueled me as I spent the next few years educating and organizing for peace and justice in the Middle East. I told my stories from Iraq to any group that would listen. I spoke at public libraries, universities, churches, and elementary schools. I worked hard to put a human face on the Iraqi people. I tried to find commonalities between “us” and “them” that would provide something for my audiences to relate to.

Eventually, after 9/11, I did not need to remind my audiences that Iraq existed. Despite the lack of a connection between Al-Qaeda and Iraq, the country had been fatefully intertwined with America’s response to 9/11. My talks to small groups in libraries morphed into large teach-ins, demonstrations, and conferences. Despite the opposition of millions, the United States invaded Iraq and the country has been engulfed in seemingly bottomless violence since.

I am no longer an anti-war organizer, but my burning questions about the nature of suffering and evil that inspired that work still motivate me. With the help of the Schepp Foundation, I’ve brought those questions to seminary.
Unlike most of my classmates, I am not planning to be a parish minister. I study theology because it gives me a language for exploring why life can be simultaneously beautiful and cruel. Theology, unlike my experiences as an organizer, allows me space to dwell in nuances and contradictions, and to be in the company of people who for millennia have been struggling with the same questions.

Theology is meaningless if it is confined to the classroom, so I continue to bring myself close to moral complexities. Lately I’ve been working in the criminal justice system. Last year, when most of my classmates were working in churches, I found a field placement in a New York State women’s prison, where I was a Teaching Assistant in a college-level sociology class. Before that, I volunteered on an organic farm in Illinois alongside participants in an agricultural job-training program for homeless and formerly incarcerated men and women. Some of the people I have come to know committed crimes that chill my bones. Some were victims of circumstance. Most made choices that they regret—choices that I have never had to make.

I study theology because I cannot separate myself from the full range of human expression. Because I am connected to all people and also because I am responsible for the actions of the government to which I give my tax dollars, I have to recognize that I am the American government. I am the people of Iraq. I am the prisoner and the victim of her crime. I am all of these things—and I am just myself, a passionate and endlessly struggling student of theology trying to make sense of it all.
On the Frontline in the Battle Against HIV

By Katie Graves-Abe

I remember clearly when I knew that I wanted to spend my life combating poverty and health issues in developing countries. After a childhood in the mountains of Arizona, my father joined the State Department and we moved to Kinshasa, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). As an 11-year old child, the sight of immense poverty, illness, and malnutrition was a shock. At the same time, however, I witnessed the kindness and grace of our Congolese friends and neighbors. I knew that people should not have to live in those conditions and that I wanted to be involved in work to help.

With the assistance of the Leopold Schepp Foundation, I was able to get my Masters in International Affairs from Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs so that I could begin work in international development. As part of my degree program, I had the opportunity to volunteer with the International Center for Equal Healthcare Access (ICEHA- www.iceha.org). ICEHA is a non-profit organization that engages healthcare professionals to rapidly transfer their expertise on HIV care and infectious diseases to colleagues in developing countries. While volunteering with ICEHA (doing an analysis of a pilot program in Cambodia), I learned about the immense impact the AIDS pandemic is having on developing countries. Forty million people are living with HIV worldwide and nearly 95% of those are in developing countries. Everyday 14,000 people become infected with HIV and 8,500 die from AIDS. When you think about the human stories behind these numbers, the orphaned children, the schools and hospitals without staff, the devastation of families, the impact is astonishing. Many developing countries finally have access to life-saving antiretroviral drugs for HIV patients; however, they are also learning that drugs alone are not enough. If you do not also have local healthcare workers who possess the practical clinical skills and operational systems needed to handle large numbers of HIV patients on treatment,
the drugs will not curb the impact of the epidemic.

I fell in love with ICEHA because it was one of the only organizations that recognized this problem and developed an innovative, sustainable solution: using volunteer health workers from the West who have extensive experience in HIV to transfer their skills to local health professionals in developing countries through a model of clinical mentoring. Since joining ICEHA as a staff member more than 2 years ago, I have had the opportunity to recruit, screen, and train these clinical, mentor volunteers and send them on assignments to Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific. Through these volunteers, I have been able to see the impact one person can have on a huge problem like the HIV epidemic. Every week, volunteers tell me about hundreds of patients being started on antiretroviral treatment as local health workers become more confident and able to handle their own patient population. This literally means that people on the verge of death are able to return to their families, jobs, and lives again. A few weeks ago, one of the local doctors that ICEHA works with in Vietnam commented to me that “I cannot tell you how many Vietnamese lives ICEHA volunteers have saved.” The HIV pandemic is an enormous challenge and will need the work of many organizations and governments to solve, but I am grateful to even have a small part in helping to ensure that countries have the skills and human resources they need to effectively fight the epidemic from within.
“So how was Africa?” Although I had anticipated answering this question upon my return to the United States, I still struggle with the appropriate response. Working with orphaned and vulnerable children in Zambia was life changing and knowing how to properly articulate such a dynamic and intense experience remains challenging. However, I am honored and grateful to share the work I was involved in over the past five months.

In April, I traveled to Zambia to complete the final practicum requirements for my Master of Social Work degree. I worked primarily with Mothers Without Borders. MWB is a non-profit organization based in the United States that partners with community-based organizations internationally to provide care and support for vulnerable children. Recently, Mothers Without Borders has focused its efforts on orphaned and disadvantaged children in Zambia by supporting a small children’s home located outside of the capital city, Lusaka. Due to the AIDS epidemic, overwhelming numbers of children have been orphaned and often left alone to care for themselves. In response to this orphan crisis, Mothers Without Borders has decided to expand the children’s home.

As part of my practicum, I was asked to conduct an evaluation of the Mothers Without Borders children’s home. I lived at the home for five weeks as I observed its daily operations. At the end of the five weeks, I interviewed each staff member
and then compiled a report which included general observations of current service provision and recommendations for the future expansion.

I know I will always be grateful for the time I spent in Africa, but I will specifically cherish the five weeks I spent working, playing, eating and learning at the children’s home. I was deeply touched by the dedication and genuine love of the staff and the resiliency and courage of the children. I will never forget the tiny hands that often reached up to mine and the trusting faces that were quick to smile...I will also never forget my responsibility to work towards allowing them a future and an opportunity to dream.
Bringing Peace of Mind to Those Left Behind

Pentagon Memorial Update, Status & Forecast

By Keith Kaseman

Since my last update to the Leopold Schepp Foundation, much progress has been made towards the realization of the Pentagon Memorial, an approximately two-acre park that is currently under construction to honor those whose lives were taken on September 11, 2001 at the Pentagon. While development of key components of the project has consistently progressed over the past two years, construction activity has increased exponentially since the official ground-breaking / site-dedication ceremony was held at the Pentagon on June 15, 2006.

An incredibly emotional event for everyone involved, the ground-breaking ceremony demarcated what will prove to be one of the most important milestones of the project—the transition from countless hours of collaborative work in the development of an idea to actual, physical construction on site. Over 300 family members who lost loved ones at the Pentagon were joined by a wide range of Congressional, Executive, military and civic dignitaries on site to be addressed by both Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Jim Laychak, the President of the Pentagon Memorial Fund, with hear-felt speeches. While there was hardly a dry eye in the audience during both speeches, an indescribable but overwhelmingly positive sense permeated the atmosphere upon the conclusion of the ceremony. Practically everyone in attendance mingled on-site for approximately an hour, with sporadic conversations between family members who lost their loved ones, project team members, people who were in the Pentagon and survived that fateful day, Presidential Cabinet Members and project team-members, who flew in from all over the country. Julie Beckman, my partner, and I were honored, as we always are, to meet numerous family members who we hadn’t met before, and to visit with everyone else that we have become quite close to along the way. Such occasions provide a spike in the honor that we feel to be a part of this project, and reinforce what it is all about—contemplation and respect.
KEITH AND JULIE (FAR RIGHT, STANDING) AT THE PENTAGON MEMORIAL
Site excavation began immediately after the ground-breaking ceremony, with up to 40 dump-truck loads of dirt removed from the site each day. The first task at hand is to relocate the myriad utilities currently on the site to its periphery in preparation for a clean slate on which the Pentagon Memorial will be constructed. As such, the site is now made up of a two-acre by 8-feet deep hole, with the deep-earthwork preparations well underway for all systems that will support the Memorial.

Parallel to this effort is the continued development and refinement of all of the park components, the most important of which is the Memorial Unit—the heart of the Memorial at large. One hundred eighty-four Memorial Units will be dispersed through the park, organized on a timeline based on the ages of those whose lives were taken. As such, the Memorial Unit is a highly articulate element that demarcates a space that is dedicated to each individual, and is several things at one time: a reflecting pool of water that glows with light at night, a cantilevered element to sit on or place mementos upon, and the place where each individual name will be engraved. Given its importance, the Memorial Unit has required an immense amount of research, development and refinement and the prototyping process continues with manufacturers and fabricators spanning both coasts of the USA. We expect to have a fully refined pre-production prototype on-site this December for review and display. From that point forward, production will ramp up and run parallel with all other facets of construction.

Of course, along with all of the above activities are countless other milestones that we continue to pass through weekly at this point. We still feel incredibly honored to be a part of this effort, and to be active in the development of an idea with a massive team of incredible collaborators.

For more information regarding the Pentagon Memorial, or to donate to the Pentagon Memorial Fund, please visit www.pentagonmemorial.net.

To see our newly launched website for additional images of the Pentagon Memorial, and what else we've been up to, please visit www.kbas-studio.com.
IN MY MIND

By Zef Domgjoni

I envision a world where hate is unknown. Where God’s love has grown.
Angels take flight across the skies,
Humanity’s greatness is on the rise.
This is my dreamworld,
Where hatred has been hurled,
Into a bottomless chasm,
Caught in the throes of a dying spasm.
Here, nature abounds,
Heaven’s trumpet sounds.
Heralding a new era of kindness,
We’ve been cured of our mortal blindness.
The Devil tempts us to no end,
But to his will we do not bend.
Each time that we bleed,
We nourish the Earth’s seed.
The human heart is free of malice,
In each other we find solace.
In this paradise,
We have one vice:
Love,
Love of God,
Love of body,
Love of soul,
Respect is our only goal.

ZEF DOMGJONI,
born in Kosovo, Yugoslavia, received a scholarship in 2000 while at Lehman College majoring in English Literature with a specialization in creative writing.
He is currently working at Elizabeth Arden and writing a memoir about his mother who he lost to cancer. While at Lehman, he wrote, produced and directed the play “Buried Voices.”
Nurturing Peace through Art

By Jivan Lee

The first time I volunteered in Adafianu, Ghana was with Bard College’s Ghana Project in January of 2003. While there, I worked with some of the country’s poorest people to build the Tetekope Primary School. What greeted me was a culture rich with music and tradition, with vibrant clothing, spicy food, and weekly drum and dance celebrations. Adafianu is a place where music rarely ceases—even poor fishermen pay a man to play the cowbell so they can sing while hauling in miles of net. Huge hand-carved fishing boats lay next to the sea, palm trees line the beach, and most people live in thatched huts. At times living here is inspiring, but it can also be painful—so much beauty exists amid unchecked pollution, social tension, violence, foreign resource exploitation, and the unquestioned and consuming waves of modernization.

After returning home, I began thinking about what I could do to address the problems I observed while in Adafianu. There were so many! Why was Adafianu so breathtaking and vibrant, and also so unhealthy and precariously close to collapse? Why were so many people in developed countries comfortable while a Ghanaian child I worked with died because his family couldn’t afford a $40 vaccine? And what about the dark history of the Ivory Coast slave trade? How was it possible for the governor of Elmina Castle
to worship his god in a private church two floors above the dark, cramped, and disease-ridden slave chambers in which West Africans awaited the Middle Passage?

In the spring of my sophomore year, I began thinking that the problems Adafianu faced arose in part from ignorance as well as emotional disconnection from others. I reasoned that many destructive, hurtful, sometimes horrifying acts are caused by people who themselves are emotionally injured and scared. I also believe (and still do) that emotionally healthy people are generally more compassionate and willing to acknowledge their role in destructive situations, and more likely change their hurtful behavior. This was the motivation for co-founding the Children’s Expressive Arts Project (CEAP). I hoped that a group of well trained volunteers equipped with huge duffle bags of art supplies and a lot of energy would use the concept of Expressive Arts Therapy as a framework for helping children—both in the U.S. and abroad. The idea is to provide gentle guidance and a safe space where children can use art to better understand themselves and in so doing, begin to develop constructive ways of making peace with the world around them.

Children were an obvious age group to work with (even through CEAP is no longer limited to kids)—we wanted to start with our future leaders. And using art also seemed like a natural choice. I paint, drum, and take pictures, and art helps me make sense of the world. It is universally understandable; a common link between me and you and everyone around the globe.
Since 2003, CEAP volunteers have brought their expertise and art supplies to children in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Colombia, Chicago, New York, and New Orleans. Two winters ago I again traveled to Ghana and this time, loaded with art supplies and a year and a half of CEAP training, I led workshops for children in addition to building school facilities with the Ghana Project. Last spring a CEAP volunteer worked in India with women who had recently escaped the sex-trade. And today the project continues training new volunteers, working with children in Upstate New York, and preparing for the next international trip. CEAP volunteers are also planning to establish CEAP as an independent non-profit organization outside of Bard, a transition I will help the project make.

But let me pick up on another part of the story. The second time I was in Ghana, I went swimming in the ocean, got pummeled by a wave, and contracted chronic giardiasis after swallowing a mouthful of seawater. It took six months to recover from the infection. During that time I finished my first year of graduate work at the Bard Center for Environmental Policy. My experience with Giardia again focused my attention on the issues Adafianu faced, but this time more specifically on environmental conditions.

People in Adafianu use the ocean as their toilet, bath, dump and food source. While this might have worked for thousands of years, it no longer does. The ocean cannot provide enough fish for the rising population, nor can it disinfect and decompose the waste that every day flows...
down the beach. Adafianu’s fishery is nearing collapse, the water is growing less safe, and the artisanal fishing culture is disappearing.

There are numerous examples of similar situations where people are ignorant of their impact on the environment, don’t know alternatives and continue using their surrounding ecosystems as if their resources are infinite. Other people realize their impact, but are so disconnected from it that they feel no pressing need to change their behavior. But this behavior stems from conditioning, and in some cases from the denial of a nagging, “inconvenient truth,” as Al Gore would put it. The ecosystems on which we rely are not infinite resources. Humans can dramatically impact their surroundings, and if behavior remains largely unchanged, we will worsen our global situation.

My interest in this global predicament grew during my first graduate semester, and I decided to step down from co-directing CEAP to concentrate on environmental studies. When CEAP started, I had hoped that somehow we would be able to promote awareness of current environmental issues through the project’s work, but for now, CEAP remains focused solely on emotional health.

So, while CEAP’s mission is still my mission, the project is flourishing under the directorship of other ambitious students, and I’m spending my time addressing ignorant and disconnected treatment of the environment. I’m now living in New York City and working with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), one of the most effective environmental organizations in the world. My job is to assess and improve the environmental performance of professional sports teams and their stadiums. Millions of people look up to professional sports teams and I am thrilled to be helping these large organizations promote environmentally responsible behavior.

My long term goal is to expand the understanding of the environment from something external and separate to something more inclusive and personal. My hope is that positive changes in our behavior, be it at a baseball game or at the office, will eventually trickle down to people in Adafianu, or animals in the Arctic, or our friends in the next town over.
Resolving the Past and Seizing the Future in Cambodia

By Bandol Lim

On July 14 and 15, over 700 national and international participants filled a standing room only conference hall to listen, learn, and voice their viewpoints about the upcoming Khmer Rouge Tribunal and the establishment of a Human Rights Commission. Police and gendarmes closed off an entire neighborhood block to accommodate national and international participants’ interested in putting Khmer Rouge leaders on trial for genocide and establishing a new social foundation based on law and order.

Cambodia is rich in cultural history. Over the last century, it has gone through remarkable periods of change including monarchy, colonialization, genocide, civil war, and modernization. Years of unresolved conflict have led to a culture of impunity. Despite the physical and emotional scars that traumatized the nation, Cambodians are seeking to restore its peaceful and compassionate identity.

My internship with the University of Cambodia was superb because, as the conference coordinator and facilitator, I had the opportunity to manage a dynamic Cambodian staff. Plus, it gave me the opportunity to work directly with influential leaders of the public and private sectors.

BANDOL SPEAKING IN CAMBODIA
aiming to rebuild Cambodia’s society after years of civil strife. It felt great to be an agent of social change and to have had so many different people from all walks of life attend our community events. In this historic moment, I was captivated by participants’ emotions and passion as the community attempted to reconcile four years of atrocities, put the past to rest, and move towards positive social change. Throughout the conference, emotions ran high and a sense of accomplishment was reflected in misty eyes during the President’s closing statements.

In a twist of fate, Dr. Haruhisa Handa, a Japanese philanthropist renowned for his global international development work, was in attendance. Dr. Handa, touched by the emotions of the symposium, offered the University $1.3 million dollars toward the educational development of the Cambodian Genocide Fund. Thus, under the umbrella of the University of Cambodia, the Dr. Handa Foundation was established with three immediate objectives: 1) pay homage to families and victims of the Cambodia Genocide, 2) create documentation of victims’ and witnesses’ stories for educational purposes, and 3) collect evidence that could be used for the upcoming Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

My biggest accomplishment during the internship was establishing back to back conferences relating to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (KRT) and the development of a Cambodian Human Rights Commission (CHRC). The internship helped me grow academically, professionally, and personally. It gave me the opportunity to participate in the
The university’s educational and community development projects. These projects, relating to rural and private sector development, conflict resolution, and the economic and political situation of Asia, make the university a powerful instrument of social change.

The summer 2005 went by fast and before I knew it, was coming to an end. It was time to pack my bags and return home to the States to complete my studies. However, after many conversations with students, community members, and public and private officials, I decided to take year a off from my studies and continue to work on new projects. The reason I chose to stay was not for money, prestige, or academic, personal, or professional reasons. It was because I was asked to stay by community members to help bring about positive social change.

The following year in Cambodia was not without its challenges and accomplishments. I continued to work on community and educational development projects such as:

- The Dr. Handa Compensation and Memorial Fund for the Victims of the Khmer Rouge Genocide (August 2005-2006)
- A seminar on the Attraction of Foreign Investment in Cambodia (September 2005)
- The University of Cambodia’s Inaugural Graduation Ceremony (September 2005)
- The 1st Asia Economic Forum on “The Future of Asia: The First East Asia Summit and its Implications for Asia and the World” (October 2005)
- Cambodia Investment, Trade and Infrastructure (November/December 2005)
- Noh by Firelight at Angkor Wat (January 2006)
- Dr. Handa’s Ambassadors’ Series (February 2006)
- The University of Cambodia Leadership Career Development Center (February/March 2006)
Reflecting on my experience, I can say that I made the right decision to extend my tenure. The reward of seeing a diverse community come together and work towards societal improvement for future generations has left a lasting impression on my mind and my heart. Shortly after I completed my service with the University in June 2006, the media announced that the Khmer Rouge Tribunal was getting underway as prosecutors began to identify top leaders and those most responsible for the Cambodian Genocide.

I have grown so much through this experience. I am willing to dedicate my life to make a positive social impact for a compassionate society. I was inspired by the people’s will, commitment, courage, passion and determination to develop their society and put the past to rest. Thanks to the warmth of the Cambodians, my commitment towards international development and poverty reduction is stronger than ever. The experience in Cambodia has reinforced my desire to bring about positive social change and continue to live my dreams in creating an equitable and just world, in which all citizens live with dignity.

My immediate plan is to complete my graduate studies at Clark University in the International Development, Community, and Environment (IDCE) Program. Afterwards, I plan to return to Cambodia and continue my development work.
Building Peace Through Economic Development

By Behzad Noubary

Iranian by birth, I moved first to Germany and, finally in 1988, to the U.S. after my family left Iran to escape the Iran-Iraq war. As my ability to assimilate into foreign cultures was repeatedly challenged, I confronted the root causes of my ever-changing surroundings. I wondered, “Why did the war happen? Who was responsible for its continuation? Why did the leaders in Iran repeatedly refuse to end the war when they could have?”

These questions became less salient to me as I adjusted to American culture, but the questions lingered nonetheless. As an undergraduate, I studied mathematics and began working as a consultant at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) upon graduation. My work at PwC involved constant international travel and I became fascinated by the role of cultural and political differences in shaping business relations. I wondered what role these factors might play in international relations, especially in developing countries.

In June of 2002, shortly after becoming a US citizen, I resigned from PwC in order to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer. I taught math as a Secondary Education Volunteer in a remote village in Burkina Faso, West Africa. Two years in Africa provided opportunities for self-discovery and affirmation. The satisfaction I derived from doing grassroots development work showed me that I would only be fulfilled personally and professionally if my work helped to improve the lives of others. Furthermore, the effects of conflict and violence were again revealed during my Peace Corps service. As fighting broke out between government loyalists in the south and rebels in the north of Ivory Coast, thousands of Burkinabè migrant workers fled persecution by returning to Burkina. Again, I asked myself why such conflicts arise and how they might be resolved.
Seeking answers to such questions and wanting to contribute to the resolution of such conflicts, I wish to pursue a professional career in international affairs. Specifically, I desire to contribute to the development of U.S. foreign policy and relations with the Middle East, in particular, the Persian speaking areas of Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. Alternatively, I would like to work as a member of an international organization such as the United Nations to resolve international conflict and to negotiate peace. I am currently pursuing a master’s degree at Columbia University’s School of International and Public
Affairs (SIPA). Columbia was a natural choice due to its strong Middle East program and proximity to the UN.

I spent this summer working in Kabul, Afghanistan, fulfilling the internship requirement of the SIPA degree. I worked as a Market Development Specialist for Afghanistan Market Development (AMDi, www.amdi-international.com), a unique Afghan-American management consulting firm that is focused on private sector development in Afghanistan. Our projects included helping a group of Afghan investors apply for a commercial bank charter and building a marketing plan for the American company 3M as it prepares to enter the Afghanistan market for the first time. AMDi was a great fit as its work focuses on the nexus of development and the private sector. Most importantly, the work allowed me to travel to a region that is of great interest to me.

I had an overwhelmingly positive experience in Afghanistan and am considering returning to Kabul upon graduation. As an American, my reasons for wanting Afghanistan to succeed are obvious. However, my Iranian background also serves as motivation for wanting to contribute to Afghanistan’s reconstruction. I believe that if Afghanistan were to “work”—that is, if it were to become a viable democracy with a successful market economy—it would have positive spillover effects in the region, including Iran. Finally, due to my Persian language skills, I see myself as having the opportunity to be uniquely effective in Afghanistan. As such, I feel an obligation and a special draw to the country.

I want to thank the Leopold Schepp Foundation for its generous support through the Schepp Scholar program. It is because of the funding that I received through the Foundation that I was able to take advantage of the opportunity in Afghanistan this summer. By easing the financial burden of my graduate work, the Foundation allowed me to choose an unpaid internship that was more in line with my personal and professional goals. For this, I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation.
Taking a Stand Against War: A Photographic Documentary

By Vesna Pavlovic

As an artist, you usually write statements about your work. Those written pieces reveal your artistic process and speak about your intentions. When faced with the question of whether or not your work makes a difference in this world, all you can hope is that it does, and that your audience, no matter how big or small, appreciates your effort and engages in a conversation with you. With this interaction comes the fulfillment of your ideas and in those moments, I believe, you are challenged to go through some changes on a personal level.

Since my arrival in New York and the beginning of my study in the Visual Arts Program at Columbia University last year, I have felt this challenge both on a very personal level and also within the community of artists around me. The first academic year has passed with many unresolved questions and a few answered. Perhaps the process of dialogue with myself and with others and the ongoing shifting and rethinking of my art, is what makes me continue to produce work and be excited about it.

I have been working as a photographer for almost 15 years. This profession has enabled me to meet some amazing people and to experience the world in a very particular way. My original approach was through a documentary perspective. Coming out of the Film Academy in the beginning of the nineties, I was faced with uncertainty in my profession and in my country, Yugoslavia. Wars had started and many people were leaving the country. I felt that the only avenue in those years was to actively work and record what was happening within peoples’ everyday lives. I was never interested in being a war photographer. For me, the “event” was happening away from the front lines where life was getting more and more difficult and people were trying to make sense of what had become a senseless time. There is a particular project I would like to share in this article. During
WOMEN IN BLACK,
SASA, STASA AND VIOLETA,
REPUBLIC SQUARE,
BELGRADE, 1994
the war in Yugoslavia, I produced a series of photographs which are important to me and reflect my dedication and belief.

In the nineties, I collaborated with Women in Black, a small group of women in Belgrade, who formed a local branch of the international network of women against war. In October 1991, this group of women decided to take a political stand. They began a public, non-violent protest against war, every kind of ethnic hatred, the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, nationalism and militarism, discrimination and violence. I became fast friends with the women I met in Women in Black. I participated in many of their activities: visiting refugee camps, attending international gatherings of the Women in Black organization, participating in workshops on the education of women, and finally joining their silent vigils every Wednesday in the main city square of Belgrade, and in many other cities throughout the country. During those times it was very dangerous to stand on the street holding signs, inviting strange gazes. The demonstrators’ persistence, no matter the weather, and the decision to raise their voices was extraordinary. By saying: “Not in our name,” Women in Black took a critical distance from any regime and demanded a change. The work we created together was published in a book in 2000. This book continues to be an important record of our common effort to remain active and to believe in the possibility of change, even though at times it seems as though nothing has changed at all.

Now, ten or more years later, I find myself in a slightly different world within a community of artists in graduate school and with new challenges lying ahead of me. I moved to the United States two years ago for the professional challenge and to refocus my work. The art world is more diverse than ever and the field of photography is especially challenging for me. Being in school provides a perfect framework to experiment and determine my future direction. On another note, my son Luke, who was born last November, will soon be a year old and watching him grow and change makes my life very special.
Dreaming of Africa

By Rebecca Perry

Some say life is like a car at night: you can only see as far as the headlights illuminate the road. If I were asked 20 years ago what I’d be doing in life, international public health would have been my last answer. I am from a family where at age 50, neither of my parents had traveled outside of America. Even in my extended family, no one had been beyond Europe. In 1995, I became a pioneer in my family; I was invited to be one of twelve students to take part in a cultural exchange in Israel and Senegal called Operation Understanding. While eleven of the students in the group were extremely excited about the traveling, I, having little travel experience, was a bit non-plussed. Yet, this trip unexpectedly changed my life. Something happened while I was in Senegal which I still cannot quite explain, but I decided that after the trip I was going to return to live in Senegal.

The dream of returning to Senegal quickly faded once I started college. For me, college was a twisty and bumpy ride which had unexpected pitfalls, successes, and challenges. I started college determined to be a medical doctor and was disappointed when my advisor insisted that I choose a major because pre-med was not an official program at Brown University. After months of deliberation, I finally decided to major in Community Health as the classes I found interesting could be combined into this one area. Each course I took constantly reminded me of my dream of returning to Senegal.

Going into my junior year, I realized that unlike my other pre-med colleagues, I didn’t want to go straight into medical school. This meant that I had to figure out what I would do once I graduated. Determined to find a way to return to Senegal, I applied for every fellowship, job and internship available to me. When nothing surfaced and I resigned myself to simply buying a ticket to Senegal and going door to door to find work, I received a letter from the J. William Fulbright Committee. I remember my roommates giving me this thin envelope assuming that if I had been awarded a fellowship the enve-
lope would be thick with information. This single letter contained my fate for the next year. I had been awarded a Fulbright to conduct HIV/AIDS research in Senegal. My dream came true after all.

My year in Senegal was life changing. At twenty-one, I moved to a foreign country to conduct research on a topic that was not only misunderstood, but very much taboo. As things would have it, I ended up working in Matam, a village of 10,000 people, mainly women, as their husbands and brothers tended to migrate to other countries for work. The village is located 13 hours by car from the capital city in the middle of the Sahara
where temperatures reach 120 degrees. But even without consistent power or water, this desert town is where I flourished as a researcher. During the day, I conducted mainly qualitative interviews, collecting stories from women in the village about their lives, culture, sexual habits and mostly their health. At night, I’d watch the stars light up, but close in on my world. From this point, I realized where I would be spending the rest of my life—on the continent of Africa.

Today, I lead a life caught between two continents—North America and Africa. Due to the generosity of the Leopold Schepp Foundation, I was able to pursue a degree at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in public health and health economics, focusing on issues faced by communities in developing countries. My degree brought back memories of my time working in Senegal, South Africa and Bangladesh. While I learned about improving health systems and health quality, I also came to realize that poverty is a cycle which makes individuals vulnerable to disease and death. Discussions with my classmates, who were from all over the world, renewed my passion and my desire to work towards ending this cycle of poverty by improving health outcomes.

Today, I work for an international non-profit organization that provides preventive health services in over 60 countries throughout the world. In my role as a program manager based in Washington, D.C., I provide support and serve as a liaison between our southern Africa field offices and our headquarters staff and donors. Luckily, every 4 months or so, I have the opportunity to return to Africa to set up new programs, provide capacity building and training opportunities or help close out projects. This tri-semester visit to Africa keeps me focused on the day when I will return permanently and use my program management and economic skills to help design and implement more effective health systems and programs for communities. In the meantime, the car of my life drives on, lighting the way as it goes. I cannot see when I will return to this African home that my mind, body, and soul know so well, but I know it will happen one day.
Making Peace with a Turbulent Immigrant Past

By Mirsad Serdarevic

“He would compensate for his losses with a smile, and created his own inner riches. He believed that there were not only victories and defeats in life, that there was also breathing, and watching, and listening, and words, and love, and friendship, and ordinary life, which depends greatly on us and no one else.”


The optimal state of being for all humans is that of homeostasis, or psychobiological balance to which the author is alluding in the quote above. Life presents us with numerous challenges that can easily disrupt our balance. While some of those challenges are transitory, allowing us to reestablish our balance rapidly, other challenges may shake our very core, rendering us vulnerable and consequently prone to developing characteristics beyond the realm of healthy coping such as insensitivity, aggression, and vengeance. Yet history teaches us that aggression only leads to a recycling of hate which fuels imbalance and chaos. As someone whose life was uprooted in the face of aggression and war, one of my first cathartic experiences, perhaps paradoxically, was not that of the vengeance, but rather that of dialogue and the maintenance of personal friendships with those on the other side, the enemy. These friendships enabled me to demystify the “other” side, to see the universality of human experience, and reaffirmed the teachings of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.: peaceful solutions are not only possible, but the most lasting, and certainly the most humane.

I was born in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, then a part of Yugoslavia. I was fortunate enough to live, go to school, socialize and play with people of different ethnicities and religions. Mostar was an amazing place to grow up in during the 1980s. Our streets
were really safe and children felt completely at liberty to explore and discover what life is all about in the city’s many alleys and parks. In addition, Mostar was a great symbol of the region’s history of diversity and converging cultures. It was the intersection of the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic culture, Greek Orthodox culture and Roman Catholic culture. On some days you could hear an elegant harmony of church bells mixing with the Imam’s call for prayer. However, I was unfortunate enough to see the collapse of that society and experience the challenges of an uprooted life. It seems only natural that my academic pursuits led me to counseling psychology and the study of immigrant mental health.

War and early immigrant days seem distant today, though they have without a doubt shaped my life. I am now an American citizen and a counseling psychology, doctoral student at the University of Oregon. I consider myself privileged to pursue graduate education as a first generation immigrant. Yet, I will consider my good fortunes meaningful only if I am able to contribute to the kind of psychology that takes into account individuals’ communal, historical, political and social contexts while advocating for a more equitable and just society. After I graduate, I plan to teach diverse student populations at a state college while also providing psychological services for immigrants and refugees through a community mental health agency.

Finally, I would like to thank the Schepp Foundation for its generous funding through the Schepp Scholar program. The Schepp Foundation’s financial support has made it easier on me to contribute to my field of study and make significant progress toward the completion of my graduate degree. ■
What Would We do Without Her?
By Bruno Quinson, Leopold Schepp Foundation Trustee

If and when you call the Leopold Schepp Foundation, the first person you are likely to get on the phone is Kathleen Christina Ann Smith, whom we all simply know as Kathy. Her warm, kind, polite voice immediately puts the caller at ease. What better welcome could any one have to this very special organization?

Kathy was born in Brooklyn but her roots are in the Caribbean Islands. Her father was Jamaican and her mother, even though she was born in the USA, was of a Cuban mother and a Grenadian father. Today her younger sister lives with her 4 sons in the Grand Cayman Islands where Kathy visits on a regular basis.

Kathy is the second daughter in a family of 4 sisters and one half-brother. When she was 13, her parents separated but didn’t divorce for another 10 years. Her mother lives in Brooklyn in a two-family house that was purchased in 1960. Her mother resides in the main part of the house, Kathy lives in the upstairs apartment and her 40 year-old niece, the daughter of her deceased older sister, lives in the basement apartment. Her third sister lives in Albany.

Her father, who remarried 30 years ago, was always part of Kathy and her sisters’ lives. He had a special nickname for each of his daughters. Until his sudden death from a heart attack this spring, he never forgot a birthday or an anniversary; he was always there when there was a problem to solve or an important issue to settle.

Kathy graduated from high school when she was 16 but didn’t attend college until she was 23...
because she had to go out and earn money in order to afford it. She worked at Equitable Life Assurance for 7 years and then was able to attend New York University. In her Senior year, she became very ill and had to drop out. Unfortunately, when the medical bills came in, she realized she couldn’t afford to attend NYU and had to go back to work. Her field of study at NYU had been elementary education and she wanted a position related as closely as possible to the field of education. Her first job was at Gotham Nurses’ Registry where she stayed 6 years. Next stop was at the Society of Nuclear Medicine where she worked for 3 years as a coordinator in the “continuing education unit.” When that unit was disbanded, she went to work for Dr. Heiss, a renowned New York City pediatrician whom she respected and loved. Kathy worked 3 days a week for Dr. Heiss plus most weekends, but being enterprising, she felt she could take on more work. She did, as a part-time employee of Van Dow Fenton on 26th Street in the same building which then housed the Schepp Foundation. One day, she encountered Edythe Bobrow, whom she had never seen in the building before. Edythe was looking for an assistant and wondered if Kathy knew of anyone. The fortuitous encounter led to Kathy’s joining the Foundation family, where she has been for the last 18 years. Recalling the meeting, Edythe Bobrow recounted: “I liked this down-to-earth young woman right away. She had never held a fulltime position as far as I could tell, but all of her references spoke highly of her honesty, good character and hard work. I just had a wonderful feeling about her. My only question today, looking back on all the years Kathy has been at the Foundation, is how in Heaven’s name did she ever put up with me?”

Kathy’s eyes brighten when students’ names come up in conversation. Her almost daily interactions with Schepp scholars are her favorite part of her job. She has met almost every one of them in the last 18 years and can recount an anecdote about each one. Some are poignant, some are touching, and all are a reflection of her devotion to her work. She also loves interacting with the trustees, having learned to appreciate each and every one’s idiosyncrasies as well as their enthusiasm for the Foundation and its goals.
For the last 27 years, even though Kathy has been working fulltime, she has volunteered at the Natural Gourmet Institute for Food and Health three evenings a week and all day Saturday. In addition, for the last 10 years she has also volunteered for the Association of Black Women Attorneys’ scholarship committee. She helps the committee select 3 worthy candidates for scholarships each year.

Kathy lost considerable weight in the last year and looks fantastic. She does Pilates on a regular basis after having done many years of adult gymnastics. She has embraced change and, with a new director at the Foundation, whom she finds fun to work with, feels a renewed enthusiasm for her responsibilities.

Suzanne Clair Guard, Executive Director of the Foundation, sums it up best of all. “Over my professional career, I have worked with many administrative assistants and I have never worked with a person who is as professional, dedicated, hard working, and loyal as Kathy Smith. I am constantly stunned by her grace and elegance when dealing with scholars, applicants and their families, visitors to the Foundation and trustees.”

Don’t we all wish we had a Kathy Smith in our lives and aren’t we lucky that we do?

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Leopold Schepp Foundation Awards summary, 1925–2006

November 1, 2006
A Miniature Experiment in Peace

By Amy Spelz

As of late, I frequently find myself being asked what I’ve been up to. “Not much really,” I answer.

“Not much really”—well, when I think about it, that’s not exactly true. About two years ago, I decided to leave teaching at a private high school in order to pursue my master’s degree in Peace and Conflict Studies. I wanted to do more than teach juniors about social justice; I wanted to actively participate in creating peace. Teaching is a wonderfully important profession, but I was feeling frustrated with not working more “hands-on.”

With the summer free before beginning my studies, I returned to volunteer at an outdoor adventure learning center in Scotland where I worked with at-risk teenagers. I had spent the summer volunteering there two years prior. It was an amazing experience. I felt my renewed love of traveling, working in an international environment, and living in a community in an informal setting. The center operates with a small, international staff and is located on a fairly secluded island in the Hebrides. I felt rejuvenated by participating in an global dialogue, learning from and serving the participants, as well as living a simple lifestyle.

I left the center a few weeks before the end of the season to begin classes at the European University Center for Peace Studies (EPU) in an idyllic, Austrian castle town. Not surprisingly, there were courses to attend and term papers to write, but my learning was not limited to these conventional methods. I also learned from my peers. I would even venture to say that I learned most from my peers, 45 students living together in a tiny, rather isolated house which also accommodated our only 2 classrooms. We were a miniature experiment in peace. If 45 students from around the world could live in
peace (not always a quiet or tranquil peace, but a working peace), then there was hope for the world. We shared our cultures, beliefs, stories, and histories—our fears and hopes, problems and successes. It certainly was not always easy, particularly when it came to sharing a small kitchen with only two stoves and one sink, but we all survived and are better for it. It was, and will continue to be with every year, a truly global community—not without flaws, but filled with hope for what our world can be.

When we were not discussing wars and politics or learning new dances and recipes, we took trips. I saw our host country and some of its neighbors—Croatia,
Hungary and Slovenia. We also shared ideas and supported each others’ initiatives to create peace in our societies and around the world. We left each other in May, but this support and sharing continues via email.

In June, I went with some peers to the World Peace Forum in Vancouver, Canada. I attended workshops, marched for peace, learned of new initiatives worldwide, shared ideas, and added support to ongoing projects. I was inspired with hope by all that is being done throughout the world. We were no longer just 45 students, but now hundreds if not thousands actively working for peace.

“Not much really.” Hmmm. That minimizes the wonderful opportunities I’ve been afforded, particularly through the generosity of the Schepp Foundation and the support of my family. I have been blessed, and I do not think I could express how much I have appreciated my education and these experiences.

Perhaps, I say this because I am impatient to quit spending so much time on self-enrichment and spend more time trying to enrich the world with greater understanding, cooperation, justice, and peace. To spend so much time on oneself feels rather extravagant, if not outright selfish. Nonetheless, it is imperative to be educated to make a genuine and sustainable difference.

For now, I must content myself with learning patience and living in the moment—I do love academics. I am researching my Master’s thesis on liberation philosophies and social movements in Latin America. Additionally, I am teaching freshman theology part-time at a high school. I try to spark the desire for justice and peace in my students and whet their appetite for understanding and global discovery. I look to create dialogue within our classroom. Not the grand scale of inter-cultural dialogue or development that I hope one day to work in, but important all the same—working towards peace where I am, while I’m there.
Imagine a world where increased disparity between rich and poor nations and continued reliance on fossil fuels prompt wealthy nations to seize forcefully what few fossil fuel reserves remain. With only a few nations controlling nearly all of the world’s oil and natural gas reserves today and events such as the first and second Iraq wars, this scenario is not as far fetched as it might seem. Impending geopolitical instability is among the many reasons why I have chosen to pursue a career dedicated to increasing use of renewable energy technologies. In addition to mitigating the potential for more frequent and prolonged military conflict over scarce resources, clean energy technologies can be a critical vehicle through which poor and unstable nations develop their economies.

While living with the Gurung family in rural Nepal, I witnessed first-hand how access to clean energy technologies can improve the lives of the poor. The Gurungs cook their meals over an open fire with no chimney or other effective means for smoke ventilation. As a result, the air inside their one-room clay and wood hut is constantly filled with smoke. Since Mrs. Gurung does all the cooking,
she spends much of her days inhaling polluted air. If the Gurung family had access to clean, alternative cooking technologies, Mrs. Gurung would not be constantly exposed to this health hazard. Furthermore, collecting wood for fuel is extremely time-consuming. The time saved through use of alternative technologies could be dedicated to other important pursuits, such as income-generating activities and education.

My work with the United Nations Development Programme on projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America taught me that the Gurung family’s story is echoed by communities in every corner of the world. From Mongolia to Mozambique, Bolivia to Benin, improvements in the living standards of rural communities are severely hindered by lack of access to clean energy technologies. As wealthy nations structure their foreign policy around securing fossil fuel reserves to underpin continued economic growth, over two billion poor people, or about one third of humanity, lack access to the most basic energy technologies needed to perform daily tasks and improve livelihoods.

This large-scale problem requires effective policy solutions. That is why I chose to study at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. Thanks in part to a generous scholarship from the Leopold Schepp Foundation, I will complete a master’s degree in public policy in May 2007. This program will deepen my knowledge and hone my analytic abilities to help me craft practical solutions to energy-related challenges facing the developing world in the coming decades. Upon graduation, I intend to initiate public/private partnerships that promote heavy investment in clean energy technologies in developing nations. Innovative domestic and international policy frameworks can encourage the private sector to invest in clean energy alternatives in the poorest developing nations. Such technologies will improve weaker economies and decrease geopolitical tension over scarce resources.
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