



Diversity & Social Justice Project

Fall 2010 Newsletter

<http://www.hamilton.edu/college/DSJP/>





Director's Corner

by Naomi Guttman, *Professor of English and Creative Writing*

In this newsletter, you will see some of the details of the Diversity and Social Justice Project's fall programming on "Violence, Peace, and Social Justice," as well as other projects in which the DSJP and its members have been involved.

Entering its sixth year as a campus entity, The Diversity and Social Justice Project's membership has grown to over seventy faculty, staff, and administrators who are invited to participate in membership meetings, to make suggestions for speakers and events, as well as to constantly define and redefine our mission and goals. Our executive committee, composed of nine faculty and one administrator, acts in an advisory capacity to the director and also assists in the nitty-gritty of programming.

This coming academic year is particularly special because it brings with it the fruit of several years' negotiations for the establishment of the Cultural Education Center (CEC) and the new position of a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) for the college. While credit for the establishment of the Cultural Education goes primarily to those students who kept faith with that idea and struggled to make it happen, many of our members were involved. We welcome and look forward to working with Madeleine Lopez, the first director of the CEC, as well as our new Chief Diversity Officer, Donald Carter, of the Africana Studies Department.

Chosen at our members' retreat last May, our theme for 2010-2011 is "Violence, Peace, and Social Justice." In fact, the topic was originally simply "Violence," but I chose to expand it because I believe this is an opportunity to make connections between these three large abstractions and to focus on the possibility, at least some of the time, on that elusive human enterprise of peace and peace-making.

You may have noticed somewhere at some time a bumper sticker or T-shirt with the slogan, "If you want peace, work for justice." While slogans are simple—and perhaps often simplistic—the best among them have a poetic force which requires us to think them through. If justice produced peace, the implication is that many of the world's troubles would be solved if we addressed the causes of war and violence. How is violence connected to injustice? In many ways, but here are a few examples: When, under threat of violence, women and children are forced to prostitute themselves and participate in human trafficking, where is the justice? When war brings huge casualties to civilians and when the result of war is destitution of mostly women and children, where is the justice? When music is used as a weapon of torture, where is the justice? When employers use spies and foment violence to disrupt union activity, where is the justice? These are only a few of the possible topics on which we plan to have events this year.

You may well ask, but what about peace? My hope is that the DSJP can also foster discussions on peace: how can we cultivate peace in ourselves, our families, our friendships, our communities, our nation? We welcome suggestions for speakers and events that will bring our attention to peace as an antidote to violence of all kinds, so let us know.

We are particularly proud of our Student-Faculty Conference in which we feature presentations by students doing work on diversity and social justice issues. See more details inside as well as on the web: <http://www.hamilton.edu/college/DSJP/>. Please come to our events and encourage others to as well.

Naomi Guttman

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DSJP Speakers and Events, Fall 2010

Tuesday, September 14, TBA:

Reception for Linda Mussman, activist and cofounder of the Hudson-based art warehouse Time & Space Limited. Screening of the documentary "Two Square Miles": 7:00 pm, Science Center Auditorium, followed by a discussion with Ms. Mussman.

Co-sponsored with the Government Department.

For more information, contact Ted Eismeier: teismeie@hamilton.edu

Wednesday, September 22, 4:10, The Red Pit:

Cynthia Enloe, Professor in the Department of International Development, Community, and Environment at Clark University, will speak on the effects of war on women.

Thursday, September.23, 4:10, The Red Pit:

Debra Richardson, Program Director of the Utica Culinary Institute, gives the keynote address for the DSJP student-faculty conference. Her talk is titled, "Food Justice: Food as the Vehicle for Connecting Communities." **See article on p.7.**

Wednesday, October 6th, 4:10, The Red Pit:

Norma Ramos, the Executive Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, will speak on the prostitution of women and children: <http://www.catwinternational.org/about/index.php>

Monday, October 25th, 4:00, Student Center Sunroom:

Coffee Hour with Bob Moses '56, President and Founder of The Algebra Project.

Co-Sponsored with the Cultural Education Center. **See next page**

Monday, November 8th, 4:10, TBA:

Musicologist, Suzanne Cusick will speak on the use of Music as weapon of war and instrument of torture.

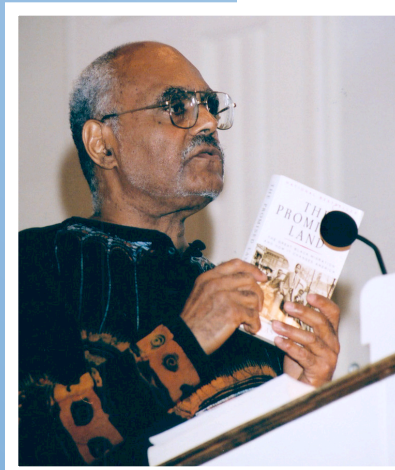
Mid-November, TBA:

A post-performance discussion of the play Slaughter City, by Naomi Wallace.

Co-sponsored by the Theatre Department.



Bob Moses Returns to Hamilton



The Cultural Education Center and the Diversity and Social Justice Project invite everyone to a coffee hour with Bob Moses:

**Monday, October 25th, 4:00 p.m.
Student Center Sunroom, (ELS).**

Civil rights leader Bob Moses, a member of the Hamilton class of 1956, is President and Founder of The Algebra Project. In 2006, he was the keynote speaker at the grand opening of the Diversity and Social Justice Project. On this visit to campus, Moses will meet students from Young People's Project @ Hamilton, give a talk in Maurice Isserman's history class, and give a lecture, sponsored by the Levitt Center, in the chapel:

Monday, October 25th at 7:30.



DSJP Student-Faculty Conference

The 2010 DSJP student-faculty conference will take place on Thursday, Sept. 23 and Friday, Sept. 24 in the Red Pit. The conference is designed to showcase the work of students who have spent the summer working as volunteers and/or scholars on issues of diversity and social justice and to make connections on campus and off. The keynote speaker will be Debra Richardson, Program Director of the Utica Culinary Institute; her talk is titled, "Food Justice: Food as the Vehicle for Connecting Communities." In addition to the Diversity and Social Justice Summer Service Associates, we have invited recipients of Kirkland Summer Research Grants and a small group of Emerson Grant recipients. So many Hamilton students do worthy internships and scholarly projects in these areas, and we hope to honor all of them by highlighting a few:

Diversity and Social Justice Summer Service Associates

Wai Yee Poon '11, Caroline Davis '11, Lauren Howe '13 , and Denise Ghartey

(see article on these students, p. 8-9)

Kirkland Endowment Summer Research Recipients

- **Jori Belkin '11** *Indian Women and Bollywood's Female Image: Globalization and the Rise of Social Conservatism* (with Lisa Trivedi, Associate Professor, History)
- **Megan Bolger '11** *Queer Queeries* (with Shoshanna Keller, Professor, History)
- **Emma Memisevic '12** *Surviving War: The Voices of Bosnian Women* (with Anna Oldfield, Visiting Assistant Professor, Comparative Literature)
- **Caitlin Taborda '11** *Forgotten Women: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Columbia* (with Ann Lacsamana, Associate Professor, Women's Studies)

Emerson Summer Research Recipients

- **Katherine Hoar '11** *Hunger Strike as an IRA Tradition: The Protest of Bobby Sands* (with Kevin Grant, Associate Professor, History)
- **Kate Northway '11** *Urban Agriculture in Utica: Maintaining Immigrant Identity While Creating Economic Self Sufficiency* (with Ann Lacsamana, Associate Professor, Women's Studies)
- **Caitlin O'Dowd, '12** *Environmentalism in the Garbage City* (with Peter Cannavo, Assistant Professor, Government)



Debra Richardson
Keynote Speaker at the Diversity and Social Justice Project
Student-Faculty Conference



On Thursday, September 23rd at 4:10 p.m. in the Red Pit,

Debra Richardson will open the conference with her talk, "Food Justice: Food as a Vehicle for Connecting Communities." Ms. Richardson came to understand the connection between food and community at an early age while waiting tables at a small café in New Jersey. Food intersected with activism when she found herself in Las Vegas in the late 80's and early 90's, hired as the evening

manager of a corporate restaurant in order to support her day-habit of organizing large-scale non-violent civil disobedience actions at the US Nuclear Test Site. Returning to upstate New York where she had graduated college (a Bachelor of Fine Arts in photography) , she settled to raise her two children while owning and operating her own restaurant and catering business, Café Nero, in Remsen.

Today as founder and Program Director of Leaf, Loaf & Ladle at the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL), she now helps individuals transition from recovery, re-entry, and youth-at-risk communities into the larger community through a food service-based job skills training program.

Somewhere between her job and tending to her ever -expanding home garden, Ms. Richardson finds time to serve on the board of Oneida County's Cornell Cooperative Extension, is co-leader of the Slow Food Mohawk Valley Chapter, actively runs workshops in food preservation techniques as a Certified Canning instructor, facilitates the Food Shed Buying Club distribution, teaches nutritional literacy through cooking classes for women in addiction-recovery and youth with disabilities, and actively participates on the Literacy Zone healthcare subcommittee promoting nutritional literacy in the community.

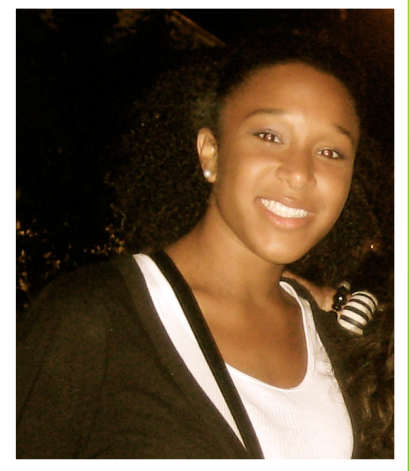
Her next goal is to instigate the formation of the first regional Food Policy Council in NYS with the assistance of the Rust 2 Green project. In October, Debra will travel to serve as a US delegate for Slow Food USA to the International Slow Food Terra Madre conference to be held in Turino, Italy.

DSJP Summer Service Associates, 2010

Denise Ama Ghartey '12

Internship Organization: The Young People's Project (YPP)

The Young People's Project (YPP) is a non-profit organization that utilizes math literacy as a tool for developing high school and college age youth into leaders and organizers who can radically change the quality of education and social conditions in the communities. The YPP is an outgrowth of the Algebra Project, a national mathematics literacy effort started by Robert Moses '56 in 1982, which provides low income students and students of color with the mathematical skills needed to enroll in college preparatory mathematics classes in high school. Denise was college math literacy worker and will continue her work as local leader with YPP at Hamilton this coming academic year.

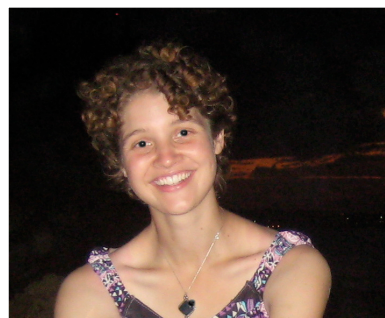


Lauren Howe '13

Internship Organization: The Northampton Survival Center

The Northampton Survival Center in Northampton, MA is a non-profit organization and emergency food pantry that serves clients in sixteen different communities within Hampshire County. It has been in operation for thirty years and maintains a very strong relationship with the local community. On an average day, the NSC distributes about 2,000 pounds of food to low-income clients, many who are elderly, homeless, disabled, unemployed, minorities, or children. Lauren worked behind the counter and also promoted the NSC Services to local agencies.





Caroline Davis '11

Internship Organization: Provincial Peace Forum, Kenya

The Provincial Peace Forum (PPF), a USAID sponsored project started in June 2008, aims to address some of the causes and effects of the post-election violence. The PPF focuses on conflict mediation and peaceful development initiatives at the provincial level in Nakuru, a province located in Western Kenya. The peace-building program has developed numerous plans to address the root causes of armed conflicts, to prevent the escalation of violence, and to mitigate the prospect of future conflict. Its focus on civic education builds awareness, accountability, and responsibility within the communities, and its youth empowerment program works to prevent youth from resorting to violence, and to mitigate the prospect of future conflict. Its focus on civic education builds awareness, accountability, and responsibility within the communities and its youth empowerment program works to prevent youth from resorting to violence in the future. Currently, PPF is working to grow the trust and confidence among and between rival pastoral communities.



Wai Yee Poon '11

Internship Organization: Border Statements Collective

Border Statements Collective, Inc. is an association that is dedicated to use “contemporary art practice in cultural preservation and education efforts.” Currently, it has a project in Ruili City, which is located on the border of China and Burma and is one of Yunnan Province’s most diverse and economically booming places. BSC uses creative initiatives to educate and prevent Ruili youth from submitting to the crime and drug filled environment. The organization offers workshops and classes at no cost for youth, ages ranging from 6 to 18, and gathers its instructors from a “transnational network of artists, cultural workers and community stakeholders. With other young fellow artists, Wai Yee created arts workshops to empower Ruili youth.

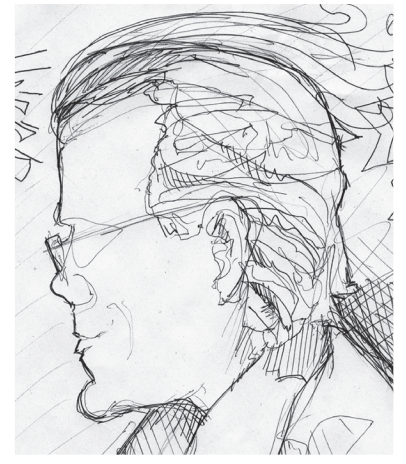
Teaching the Prison

Doran Larson, Professor, Department of English and Creative Writing

I began running a creative-writing workshop inside Attica Correctional Facility on November 13, 2006. I have since come to see that perhaps the most important outcome of this work is to help prison inmates become contributors to the cultural and moral imagination of the prison itself. If prison inmates can generate work that benefits the people who send them into quarantine, then those people--all of 'us'--might be more willing to look into prisons as they are, rather than cloaking them from view. For the men, the classroom is a place where they can share their work with the support of other inmates; here they can begin, together, to reconstruct themselves in the images of thinkers and writers, rather than as the convicts that the prison—in an era that has explicitly abandoned rehabilitation and correction—insists on making them. Yet however much the men themselves benefit, I see prison education largely as a service to the non-incarcerated: an effort to foster a more holistic conception of law and its consequences.

My critical work on prison writing seeks to conceive of prison writing as a formally coherent genre and, as such, a cogent and invaluable (but yet missing) part of the public and academic dialogue on justice.

Both efforts are incorporated into my courses on prison writing, in which Hamilton students learn to read this work as a distinct genre and one that always speaks--bearing witness--to the final, concrete results of our theories and practices of criminal justice. When students accompany me into Attic and sit with men



serving sentences of ten years to life without parole, remarkable things happen. They help one another by, for a moment, forgetting where they are, or where they came from, and thinking instead of their common passion for the work at hand, as equally serious readers and writers. The men benefit from spending time with young people who stand open before all the possibilities of the world. Students realize that, however nervous they might be, with their training in literary analysis and the history of prison writing, they have opinions and ideas that can help men who have gone through lifetimes of hard experience. Two very different worlds meet, but rather than colliding, they support and feed one another in ways that neither could suspect. For two and three-quarter hours, the prison stops at the door behind which we discuss a story by Chekhov or an essay by Maya Angelou, or an inmate's essay about life inside. Here literary aesthetics, along with critical analysis of how one can translate the realities of the prison into pictures that might enlighten the wider public, take precedence.

My courses in prison writing help students to see the vital link between literary study, the concrete world beyond campus, and social justice—not as an abstract study, or theoretical construct, but in face-to-face conversation with writers who continue an American literary tradition that begins with slave narratives. Americans are able to conceive of themselves as citizens of a liberal democracy built upon the rule of law while hosting 25% of the earth's incarcerated people—a virtual concentration-camp system for urban men of color—only because of the wall that stands between the prison-fated and prison-immune. Every time a Hamilton student crosses that wall, it grows a bit thinner.

Social Activism, the University and Sensibility

Nigel Westmaas, Assistant Professor, Department of Africana Studies

My existence as an academic, that is, an assistant professor in Africana studies at Hamilton College, was preceded by and arose directly out of activism at the political and social level in my home country of Guyana. “Social activism” for me in this sense (Guyanese context) involved struggle in a political party on two main fronts – against a “third world” type dictatorship that had arose in the South American country and a parallel pursuit of multi-racial unity between historically divided ethnic groups, namely African Guyanese, Indo-Guyanese (Asians) and Amerindians. This political and social activism directly changed my life and included experiences like picketing, street demonstrations, selling political newspapers door to door, short spells of time in dirty jails and on one occasion, an escape from thugs and subsequent overnight sojourn in a sugar-cane field.

During this struggle at home, my access to a university level education was non-existent. My initial “academic” experience, derived from personal interest in reading and plowing through archives as a hobby, was incomplete. But I never actively sought higher education abroad as university education in Guyana was my ultimate goal. After attempts to enroll (an unwanted state sponsored national service was a requirement for admission in the local university) I eventually completed my BA (Hons) degree in history. Fortuitously, I met a visiting US academic who urged me to apply to Binghamton University sociology grad school. I declined the first year but agreed, after much deliberation and soul searching, to accept an assistantship at Binghamton the following year.

I proceeded “on leave” from Guyana to further my education abroad and have resided here ever since.



My social activism in the United States is obviously not as patent as my Guyanese experience except that as a graduate student at my alma mater Binghamton University, I was heavily involved in the student associations (Caribbean, Black, Latino) and university wide struggles in specific areas of campus justice. On one occasion I had the unique misfortune of being charged (along with two other students) for trespass while attempting to play cricket in a baseball batting cage. While this may appear a frivolous (sport related) distraction, it was important in context as law enforcement arrogance and its relative by implication, racism, combined to disturb a simple pastime.

At another level, what can be unpleasant about academia or university life is the demonstrable pursuance of careers at the expense of social conscience and activism. A further unsettling feature is what we call sou sou (or su-su) in Caribbean creole, that is, confidential whispers or gossip that preoccupies campus life. As Bob Marley once sang: "some will eat and drink with you/then behind dem su-su pon you/only your friend know your secret/so only he could reveal it."

In any event, I am continually torn between the struggles in my homeland and the comforts and support systems out here. Hamilton College and its environs is another trail – with its own complexity and pace of social activism. For me, notwithstanding local struggles in all their variety, it is important to bring for us to bring awareness and support of the poor and powerless whether here in the United States or around the world. Universal goals of unity and activism and the struggle for human rights and social justice are ongoing whether in Utica, Mumbai, Soweto, Port-au-Prince or Kinshasa. The realities of human suffering are sometimes so distant from our sensibility they cannot be felt or are ignored. Social activism, in whatever form, is an important antidote and duty.

Yvonne Zylan

Newest Member of The Diversity and Social Justice Project Executive

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

Yvonne Zylan, associate professor of sociology, earned a B.A. in East Asian Studies from Yale University, a Ph.D. in sociology from New York University and a *juris doctor* from the University of San Diego School of Law. She has published articles in the *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, the *Michigan Journal of Law Reform*, *Gender & Society*, *Social Forces*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, and *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Prof. Zylan has long been engaged, both professionally and personally, with issues of social justice, substantive equality, and cultural, social, and political inclusion. Her scholarship is centrally concerned with feminist theory and praxis, and addresses the social construction of sex, gender, and the body in and through legal discourse. She is currently working on a book length study of sexuality, social theory, and law entitled *States of Passion: Law, Identity, and the Social Construction of Desire*, which will be published by Oxford University Press in March 2011. The book offers a critical look at contemporary LGB political strategies embracing hate crime legislation, marriage, and sexual harassment law. Prior to joining the Hamilton faculty, Prof. Zylan practiced law for three years in the litigation department at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP and she remains a member of the bar in good standing in the State of California and in the federal courts of the 9th District. In 2005, she appeared before the Bankruptcy Appellate Panel of the 9th Circuit challenging state and federal bankruptcy law as applied to same-sex couples. In addition to teaching sociology at Hamilton College, Prof. Zylan writes about the intersection of



law, sexuality, politics, and sociology at:

(Un)Natural Law (<http://unnaturallawblog.blogspot.com/>).



What is the Diversity and Social Justice Project?

The DSJP is a group of faculty, staff, and administrators committed to sustained engagement on issues of diversity and social justice at the institutional, regional, and national levels and aims to offer students, employees and members of the broader Hamilton community the intellectual and moral tools for becoming global citizens and compassionate human beings.

Director, Naomi Guttman, Professor, English

Members of the DSJP Executive:

Jessica Burke, Assistant Professor, Hispanic Studies

Peter Cannavo, Assistant Professor, Government

Carolyn Carpan, Director of Public Services, Burke Library

Martine Guyot-Bender, Professor, French

Angel David Nieves, Associate Professor, Africana Studies

Anjela Peck, Assistant Professor, Comparative Literature

Nigel Westmaas, Assistant Professor, Africana Studies

Chad Williams, Associate Professor, History

Yvonne Zylan, Associate Professor, Sociology

For more information, visit:

<http://www.hamilton.edu/college/DSJP/>



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