

FALL 2007



PADNOS
INTERNATIONAL
CENTER

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Cover photos from Ghana courtesy Renee Chouinard.

Grand Valley's Study Abroad Enrollment Trends
Ghana: A Banku of Hope
Remembering the Crossings: A Review
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International Child Welfare





From the Executive Director

By Mark Schaub

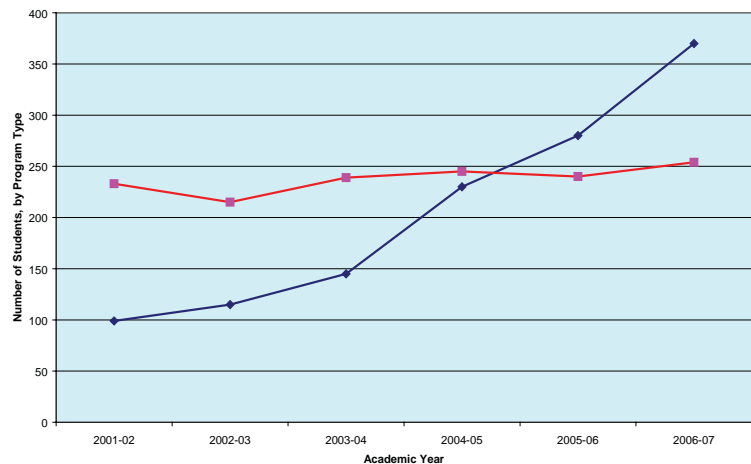
Grand Valley is in the Top 10 for Study Abroad! You may have seen the news release that GVSU is among the top 12 Masters-level universities in the nation—in numbers of students participating in study abroad programs. Though released in April 2007, this figure from the *Open Doors* publication by the Institute of International Education (IIE) is based on data from the 2004-05 academic year. With the growth we've seen in the past two years, I'm expecting the 2008 *Open Doors* will show GVSU in the top 10.

We in the Padnos International Center are excited to be in the top 12 nationally. But our excitement is also tempered by the knowledge that by *percentage* of students participating, GVSU is far short of the top 10; in fact, less than 5% of GVSU study abroad (which is still well above the national average, with less than 1% of American undergraduates studying abroad). We have a long way to go, especially if we measure ourselves against private institutions like Kalamazoo College, where study abroad participation is over 90%.

Against the Grain

Unseen in the Open Doors data is a trend about which we are truly excited, and it is a trend at GVSU that is the opposite of the national trend: we send more students abroad independently than we do in group programs. At the same time, our quality faculty-led programs continue to attract solid numbers. Nationally, the trend is clearly towards growth in students selecting shorter-term programs (of 4 weeks or fewer) that are populated by other students from the same university, and led by one or more faculty members from that same institution. Recent experience at two International Education conferences confirm this; nearly every other Chief International Officer I spoke with at the Association of International Education Administrators conference said their universities were offering more shorter term programs, because "that's what the students want."

GVSU Study Abroad Participation



Waterfall in Ghana. Photo courtesy Renee Chouinard.

Our Priorities

We in the Padnos International Center believe that a year abroad or a semester abroad is the richest educational experience available through GVSU. This is not to say that the dozens of short-term, faculty-led programs are not high-quality, fantastic, life-changing experiences. They are. And this year, over 290 of our students enjoyed these programs, from Shanghai, China, to Sydney, Australia, to St. Petersburg, Russia. These programs are led by some of GVSU's finest faculty and involve faculty and lecturers from some of the best universities in the host countries. The programs to developing countries, such as those to El Salvador, Nicaragua, India, and South Africa, are especially rich, and are often in destinations where reliable semester-long programs are not available.

At the same time, we continue to prioritize longer-term independent programs. To that end, our study abroad grants are weighted heavily in favor of semester- or year-abroad participants. We are no longer soliciting new proposals for the more costly short-term programs. We continue to counsel students to seek the finest quality programs.

What about Quality?

Not all study abroad experiences are equal. That is, the cultural immersion experienced by study abroad participants can vary widely. On the one hand, there are many programs in which all the courses are taught by American faculty with classes full of fellow Americans—all "inserted" as though on an island in a foreign setting. On the other extreme are programs with regular courses at an overseas institution, with local/native faculty teaching regularly offered courses to a representative mix of that institution's student body. Most GVSU faculty and staff would agree that the latter offers greater possibilities for cultural immersion than the former, and we think so too.

Recommended Reading

"Thomas L. Friedman's *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, captures challenges and opportunities and fully establishes the role of higher education in shaping our future."
– Thomas J. Haas, President

"I recommend reading Tayib Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North*. This novel goes well beyond the simple dichotomies of North/South, First World/Developing World, Black/White to explore more complex motivations on the part of all characters."
– Mark Schaub, Executive Director of the Padnos International Center and Associate Professor of Writing.

The Eastview database is phenomenal. Chinese academic journals (among those from other countries), in Chinese, abstracted in English, really reveal the diversity of ongoing academic thought in the People's Republic of China. It's a fantastic resource for research or just browsing.
–Josef Gregory Mahoney, Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies and East Asian Studies

"*Three Cups of Tea*, by Ray Mortenson and David Oliver Reelin, is an inspiring story of an ordinary citizen doing extraordinary work in Afghanistan."
–Kate Stoetzner, Director of International Student and Scholar Services, Padnos International Center



Ghanaian fishermen. Photo courtesy Jacques Mangala.

Ghana: a *Banku* of Hope¹

By Jacques Mangala

Last summer, I visited the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, one of GVSU's partner institutions, and the only in Africa. Ghana has been very much in the news this year due to a host of factors, among others: the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of trans-Atlantic slave trade, the accession of its President, his Excellency J.A. Kufuor, to the chairmanship of the African Union (AU), and the departure of one of its illustrious sons, *Busumuru*² Kofi Anan, from the Secretary General of the United Nations. Not many African countries are on the news for such good reasons.... So this was a special year to visit Ghana, a lovely African country and *banku* of hope. I would like to share with you my travel reflections centered around the theme of hope through two places and three characters.

The Driver

During the two hour drive from Accra to Cape Coast, I had a long conversation with the driver as we passed through scenic villages, and came across goats and sheep, gracious women returning from the fields, and young men and women, some just sitting by the road, others offering something for sale: livestock, bananas or Coca-Cola. It was then I realized how driving in America was so boring. All you see are cars, trucks, cities, McDonald signs, and more cities. I wonder why I always need a coffee when driving long distances in the US. There, the connection of the people to the road is much more tangible, physical. The road, as a symbol, a vital artery of social and economic relations, seems more real as it connects villages to villages, villages to cities. Along it, people are on the move... some in air conditioned cars, others bare-foot or in Nikes. We have yet to see Heelys. As we drove through these many faces of Ghanaian society, I asked the driver what he thought about his country's social, political and economic situation. I have to confess that I was expecting him to complain or otherwise paint a picture somehow contrasting with the IMF and other international institutions' rosy statistics on Ghana for the past years. I don't trust statistics very much, I have to admit, especially when it comes to developing countries. It must be hard to be a driver ... in Gambia or Ghana. To my surprise, my new friend showed dignity and expressed great hope for the future. These are his words, in substance: "People should work hard and not expect easy money. The government is working for the good of the country... New roads, schools and hospitals are being built. Ghanaians will never –he insisted on that- tolerate a return to military rule. Things are getting better." Usually, such a discourse is rather characteristic of fat cats' talk...It is a rare commodity among those who are struggling to make it day after day, on one or two dollars a day³. Coming from the bottom, this expression of hope, this sense of a better future, both surprised and encouraged me as we drove past the White Castle, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, sea of sorrow, whose water should turn red, on this 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

1 *Banku* is a very popular Ghanaian dish made from fermented corn flour.

2 *Busumuru* is the highest nobility title in the Ashante tradition. Reserved to royalties, it has recently been conferred to the former UN Secretary General in recognition of his service to Africa and the World.

3 Some 45% of Ghanaians live on less than \$ 1 a day, 79% on less than \$ 2.

Photo courtesy Renee Chouinard.

The White Castle⁴

Introducing his collection of poems titled "Cape Coast Castle"⁵, Dr. Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang, Professor of English and Director of the Centre of International Education at the University of Cape Coast, writes: "Cape Coast Castle, the edifice and the metaphor, stands outside the limits of time. Its meaning is deliquescent. Its world is the world before naming, form or kinship. Knotty, full of discrepancies and confused codes, it rules by silence. The power of Cape Coast Castle is the power of silence, silence as the seduction and betrayal of power."

One of the ironies of the place, which speaks deeply to the human nature, is that a church was built on top of the slave-dungeons. In the silence of their prayers, those devout Christians must have heard the cries and lamentations of slaves deprived of light for weeks and dying by hundreds down there. In the power of the church silence, they must have heard, at times, their inner voice, but decided not to respond... a betrayal for the power of greed and profit. "How could this be possible?" I asked myself in the darkness and silence of the slave-dungeons. "To what God were they praying?" asked loudly the person next to me, who could not contain her tears. One thought came to my mind as I reflected on the irony of the place: for this church to be built on top of the slave-dungeons, the builders must have decided, in the silence of their betrayal, that Africans were not humans or, to put it mildly, not created by the same god to whom they were worshiping, offering prayers and grace for a flourishing trade. Confronting the same contradiction, M. L. Perry writes: "The successful operation and acceleration of the capitalist economy required a dual society: on the one hand, a careful balancing between adherence to the spirit and laws of Christianity in order to maintain social unity and, on the other hand, freedom from the obligations of the Christian spirit and laws."⁶

The tour of the castle ended at the *Door of No Return* through which enslaved Africans had to go to board the ship that would carry them to unknown lands. In a crescendo mode, this door symbolizes the cruelty of the whole slave castle experience. Most narratives of the slave castle experience only convey one side of the door symbolism, which is about the cruelty of being uprooted from one's land and losing this dimension of identity that comes from connection to a place, family, landscape, traditions and the many spirits and deities of the African land. While trying to channel emotions accumulated throughout the tour, I thought about another symbolism of the door, which is hope. Slaves were held in the castle for weeks. For the first time, with their almost blinded eyes and while passing through this door, they saw the sky...they saw and smelled the sea. Some of them must have experienced hope, hope of the unknown, the hope that on the big ship waiting for them at large, it might be

4 There are two slave castles, all painted in white, in Elmina-Cape Coast area. In all there are more than six dozen castles, forts and various trading posts on a coast-line of less than 500 kilometres. When the slave trade was abolished in 1848 there were counted seventy-six forts and castles of various sizes from Keta on the eastern coast to Half Assini on the western seaboard. This gives Ghana what may very well be the highest concentration of slave-ports anywhere in the world.

5 Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang, *Cape Coast Castle*, African Publications, Accra, 1996

6 Perry M.L. (2005), *The Last War. Racism, Spirituality and the Future of Civilization*. Oxford: George Ronald, p.60-61.

Scenes of Cape Coast Castle. Photos courtesy Jacques Mangala.





Ghanaian fishing village. Photo courtesy Jacques Mangala.

different...just a little less worse than in the castle. We know it wasn't. But it was this hope that sustained and nourished their souls during the middle passage and as they were scattered throughout the Americas and the Caribbean, from Brazil to Barbados, from Mississippi to Missouri. It is this hope that made millions of Africa's sons and daughters survive and rise up again on lands unknown to those who went through this door of no return...door of sorrow and hope.

The Elite

One night at my hotel, I met a nice fellow, who appeared to be the Executive Director of Ghana's Council of Tertiary Education, the state body in charge of formulating higher education policy and setting national standards for universities. He was very much an elite, with extensive experience in government and higher education management. Prolific scholar too, extremely well published. He had been offered a bottle of an excellent cru of RW⁷ early in the day and was apparently looking for some company. With traditional Ghanaian hospitality, he graciously invited me to join in the libation. While we set to enjoy the evening breeze from the Atlantic on this hot African night, I asked him the same question that I had put to the driver on the day of my arrival. After offering his informed and expert analysis of Ghana's situation and expressing hope and confidence in the country's future, he said something that captured my attention: "I am now 57 (He looked 40 to me. There must be something in Ghanaian cuisine or *façon de vivre!*). I will not spend more than one day in office when I reach 60, the retirement age in Ghana." When I asked why, he did not invoke the authority of the law. He said: "I have accomplished what I wanted to do when I accepted this job. I have reached my peak. It is time to let a new generation take over." The opposite reason is exactly why many African leaders hang on to office. Power is often, to say the least, their only protection against corruption and other human rights abuses⁸. The current President of Ghana, whose second term expires next year, has also made it clear that he will step down as required by the constitution. This is a true measure of leadership and another reason for hope.

The University Campus

The campus of the University of Cape Coast is experiencing a make-over. From student housing to research centers, from departmental to administrative buildings, new constructions have mushroomed everywhere. A strategic decision has been made to position UCC to better meet Ghana's educational needs of the 21 century. And resources are flowing in to transform the university into a center of excellence for the West African region⁹. While walking among anxious

7 Stands for red wine

8 Those interested in this topic may request copy of my upcoming paper on the "Politics of Presidential Tenure Elongation in Africa."

9 Unlike in many African countries, these new facilities are funded by domestic money through Ghana's Education Trust Fund. Money from the trust comes from a 2% VAT on all services. See Lydia Polygreen, Africa's Storied Colleges, jammed and crumbling, *New York Times*, May 29, 2007.



students on the way to their final exams, I thought that Ghanaians must be doing something right¹⁰. Putting money into education is the best way not to betray the hope expressed by my friend the driver. Putting money into education is the best way to keep alive his hope and prepare for a brighter future. I wish the same were true everywhere in Africa. In Ghana, Gambia or Michigan, the fundamental equation remains the same, at least as far as education is concerned.

The Service Men

Besides the driver, my second best friend during the trip was a young Ghanaian named Domey Ebenezer. Freshly graduated from the university, Domey was doing one year of national service, as required by law¹¹. Although many young Ghanaians prefer to be fined than go to national service¹², a sizable majority of them do actually join the national service. So my friend, who has been assigned to the University's Center for International Education for his national service, had the responsibility to accompany me wherever I wanted to go and make sure that my stay was the most enjoyable. He showed me around, helped to introduce me to the local culture, and took care of many details regarding my visit. He could be overprotective at times, but I truly enjoyed his pleasant company. A great dude! When, at the end of my stay, I asked what he thought about his year of national service, he responded that it had been a great learning experience and that he was happy to give back to the country¹³. Giving back to the country...another reassuring thought from Ghana, another reason for hope, especially coming from the new generation that the elite talked about in his decision to step down. It is the same hope that keeps my friend the driver driving, the same hope that enslaved Africans must have experienced when going through the door of no return. Ghana, I will return.

10 While there, I met a journalist from the Netherlands who was writing a piece on Ghana's high quality education. Three factors seemed to emerge from my discussion of the issue with Ghanaian colleagues: political leadership, institutional structures, and the value that the Ghanaian culture places on education, which translates into a strong commitment of students to academic achievement.

11 Those on national service receive a monthly allowance of 900,000 Ghanaian Cedis (\$100) from the government.

12 The fine equals to 100,000 Cedis (\$10). A ridiculous amount, even in Ghana.

13 95% or so of Ghanaian students receive a full scholarship from the government

Ghanaian fisherman. Photo courtesy Renee Chouinard.



Remembering the Crossings: A Review

Anita Van Til, Secretary for the Committee to Commemorate the
200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

In 1807, the British Parliament outlawed the trafficking of Africans sold as slaves to the New World. Moved by testimonies and with moral righteousness, Parliament put a legal end to a system of trade which dehumanized both slavers and their human cargo. The year 2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This trade in human flesh remains one of the most brutal and horrific aspects of African, American, and Caribbean History. Millions of Africans were forced into the slave trade and its effects are still felt around the globe today. Recognizing the need to remember the impact of this trade, Steeve Buckridge of Grand Valley State University's Department of History formed a committee to plan and oversee events centered on the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.



Dr. Obeng

The committee included representatives from Hope College, Calvin College, Grand Rapids Community College, Davenport University, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, Grand Rapids Public Library, World Affairs Council, the Grand Rapids Community Media Center, and professors and students from various departments at Grand Valley. Randal Jelks of Calvin College's History Department and Steeve Buckridge co-chaired the first meeting. Under the leadership of Buckridge and Jelks, the committee agreed to collaborate with several local universities and colleges as well as public institutions to reach both the academic community and the greater Grand Rapids population through a lecture series, a film series, and museum events and lectures.

Madame Deputy Ambassador for Ghana, Mrs. Irene Addo, officially launched the year's events on January 25, 2007. During the launch ceremony, Madame Deputy Ambassador spoke about Ghana's 50th anniversary of independence from colonial rule and encouraged people in the audience to return to Ghana by explaining Ghana's Joseph Project (www.thejosephproject.com). The launch ceremony continued with a lecture by Reverend Dr. E.A. Obeng, Vice Chancellor for the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. That evening, Dr. Obeng spoke about the need to remember the slave trade and how it has affected world history. He also spoke about the slave experience in Ghana and how its history continues to impact that country in particular. Over 300 people listened as Dr. Obeng explained how tattoos and facial markings saved many Ghanaians from the slave ships. The evening's lecture was both highly educational and provided the audience an opportunity to meet and speak with such esteemed Ghanaian leaders.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating and alarming of all of the lectures was Dr. Kevin Bales's lecture this past February. Dr. Bales's lecture focused on a new system of slavery in today's world and how it is continuing with very little impediment. Many students who listened to Dr. Bales's lecture were unaware that slavery still exists in our modern world and several students asked how they could make a difference. Dr. Bales directed them to the website www.freetheslaves.com to learn more about modern-day slavery.

At the end of February, Dr. Laurent Dubois visited GVSU and delivered a lecture on Haiti's Revolutionary Abolitionists. Dr. Dubois's lecture highlighted the violent abolitionists of Haiti and how their actions led to a revolution in Haiti.

Dr. Dubois reminded the audience that slavery existed outside of the United States and drew some parallels between Haiti's abolitionists' movement and the U.S. abolitionists' movement.

In March, Dr. Khedija Gadhoom organized a three-day film series at Grand Valley State University focusing on the renown African filmmaker Ousmane Sembene's most famous works, *Black Girl* and *Moolaade*. Ousmane Sembene's biographer, Dr. Samba Gadjigo, presented the films and opened the film festival with a lecture on Ousmane Sembene and his views on culture. The films dealt with issues of servitude, cultural clashes, and certain African cultural practices. Shortly after the film series, Ousmane Sembene died. We were quite fortunate to have had his personal biographer visit us to discuss Ousmane Sembene's life and work.

Dr. Orlando Patterson also visited Grand Valley in March of 2007. Speaking to a large audience, Dr. Patterson discussed some of the consequences of the Middle Passage on Africans and descendants of African slaves. The focus of his lecture was on what was lost and what was gained through the Middle Passage and the consequences of such in the U.S. and the Caribbean. Dr. Patterson's lecture was very informative and connected U.S. and Caribbean culture to African cultures.

In April, Dr. Marcus Rediker spoke about the slave ship as a dungeon. Dr. Rediker's lecture concentrated on the physical aspects of the slave ships and how people lived aboard such vessels. He described life onboard a slaving vessel and how this life severely impacted both slaves and slavers. His ability to describe aspects of the slave ship was so profound that several people in the audience were moved to tears.

In May, Dr. Darlene Clark Hine's lecture on black women and community-building was a phenomenal success. Dr. Clark Hine explained how black women created communities based on their abilities and connections within their communities. She detailed the lives of several prominent black women and some not-so-prominent ones. Dr. Clark Hine's lecture provided a sense of empowerment to many women in the audience that evening.

Other events occurred throughout the year. In February, the Grand Rapids Public Library hosted a one day event focusing on African-American life and history called "Taste of Soul Sunday". The Library's event was an enormous success and drew large numbers of people from the Grand Rapids community. In May, Dr. Veta Tucker led an Underground Railroad Tour of West Michigan. Over fifty people participated in the tour and Dr. Tucker is scheduling another tour for the fall. Also, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum hosted an exhibit, *Dred Scott: Slavery on Trial*, an incredible collection of slavery artifacts and materials highlighting the brutality of the slave trade.

Although we are nearing the end of the year, there are still events coming up. The theme of this October's Great Lakes History Conference is "The History of Racism, Slavery and its Aftermath: Recognizing the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade". Also, Grand Valley's lecture series will continue with a lecture in September on slavery in the Nile Valley by Dr. Eve Troutt Powell, and in November, Dr. Verene Shepherd will speak about commemoration and symbolic decolonization in the Caribbean.

For more information on upcoming events and programs, please see the website, www.gvsu.edu/abolition. Recordings have been made of past lectures in the series and are available by calling Dr. Steeve Buckridge in the History Department at GVSU (616-331-8550) or by email at buckrids@gvsu.edu.



Palestinian taxis waiting at Israeli road block near BirZeit University.

Impressions From the “Holy Land”

by Hermann Kurthen

Living 17 years in divided Berlin during the Cold War left a deep scar in my memory: the infamous Berlin Wall. No surprise that walls of separation maintain a morbid attraction in my psyche. While teaching at GVSU's partner university in Schwaebisch-Gmuend, Germany (www.ph-gmuend.de), last summer, I had the opportunity to join an excursion to visit the Holy Land with a group of theology and history students.

Throughout this trip to Israel, I was faced with the devastating effects of artificial borders intruding into people's lives. Standing in front of a 25 foot concrete wall in Abu Dis, a section of East Jerusalem, seemed like a recurring nightmare. The towering monstrosity arbitrarily dividing homes, gardens, and roads looked like a 21st century version of the Berlin Wall.

The Israeli builders call it a ‘Separation Fence’ against terrorism, but Palestinians claim it to be a sly plan to annex East Jerusalem and huge chunks of the occupied Palestinian Territories. In fact, the barrier does not follow the pre-1967 border but incorporates Palestinian land by anywhere from approximately 500 feet to 15 miles - annexing many unauthorized Jewish settlements on the West Bank to Israel while at the same time isolating or separating numerous homes, fields, and wells of Palestinians.

Traveling to the Palestinian West Bank, my deja-vu experience was not eased by passing through a seemingly endless number of barbed-wired bunkers and machine-gun manned Israeli watchtowers and army checkpoints. As if they had learned their trade from East German borderguards, Israeli soldiers, with an air of casual boredom, randomly searched or waved-through Palestinian travelers at will.

My attempt to strike up a conversation with some of the child-faced soldiers was met by the angry outburst of a sergeant yelling “Shut up!” unmistakably telling me, with a wave of his Uzi-submachine gun, to move on and not to further disturb his routine.

Later, near Ramallah, at BirZeit University, the largest and best know Palestinian University, I had a chance to talk to administrators and Sociology faculty about the effect of forty years of occupation. Between 1979 and 1992 Israel had closed the campus by military order 60% of the time, though many classes were held

All photos and captions courtesy Hermann Kurthen.

Wall cutting through Arab Abu Dis in East Jerusalem.



underground during that period. A total of 15 BirZeit students have been killed by Israeli forces but many more have experienced detention and arrest.

Most recently the withholding of Western aid and Palestinian tax revenues by the Israelis has led to drastic cuts of services and salaries. In addition, travel restrictions have created an air of imprisonment and collective punishment not unlike what East Germans endured during the Cold War. During my visit, I experienced a typical hour-long wait in a long column of vehicles that was searched just a few miles off campus at an Israeli roadblock in the midst of Palestinian land. It is not uncommon that local students are unable to travel freely between their homes a few miles from campus and attend their scheduled classes at the university in time.

Later, when I met members of the Israeli B'Tselem human rights group (www.btselem.org), who oppose Israel's occupation policies, they stressed that the hardships imposed on Palestinians by the 'Separation Fence' is feeding widespread discontent. Eventually this is counterproductive because it creates more insecurity.

Reflecting on my own experience in Cold War Berlin, I had to agree. Walls are the opposite of freedom. They shut off communication, strangle mutual understanding, and preserve conflicts instead of promoting solutions informed by dialogue, human dignity, fairness, and justice. My visit to the Holy Land brought home the truism that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (George Santayana). Eventually, I hope, lessons from history cannot be ignored and this wall will come down too - but how long will it take this time and at what human cost?

View from Palestinian territory towards an Israeli settlement with wall near Jerusalem.



Events

Friday, August 31, 4:00

Fulbright Information Session

215/216 Kirkhof Center

Monday, October 15, 9:00

Fatemeh Keshavarz presents her book,
Jasmine & Stars

215/216 Kirkhof Center

Monday, October 15, 9:00

Fatemeh Keshavarz lectures on contempo-
rary Iran and its presentation in the USA

Kirkhof, Grand River Room

Wednesday, October 17, 10:00

Study Abroad Fair

Grand River Room, Kirkhof Center

Thursday, October 25, 10:00

Study Abroad Fair

Hager Lubbers Exhibition Hall

Upcoming Deadlines

August 1

MCSA Teach Abroad Application Deadline

September 1

Maastricht Center for Transatlantic Studies

Teach Abroad Application Deadline

September 1

Japan Center for Michigan Universities

Teach Abroad Application Deadline

September 10

Priority application deadline for

study abroad during Winter 2008

September 28

Fulbright U.S. Student Program scholarship

application deadline.

October 1

Sean Dykstra scholarship application deadline.

International Child Welfare: From Ao Tearoa (New Zealand) to Argentina

By Emily Jean McFadden, Professor of Social Work

The International Foster Care Organization (IFCO) invited me to be a plenary speaker at their conference held in February 2007 at Hamilton University, New Zealand. IFCO had recently had its 25th anniversary, and had grown from a small, primarily European organization to become a non-governmental organization recognized by the United Nations, with global membership and connections. Thirty-one countries were represented at the conference, which had the theme of Taonga, a Maori word meaning treasure—with a spiritual connection. The topic of my speech was “Community is a *taonga*”.

I gave tribute to the Maori civil rights movement that had culminated in the *Children and Young Persons Act* of 1987. It returned sovereignty over their children to the Maori people, through the use of family decision-making procedures. Family group conferences became an effective way of keeping children out of the formal foster care or delinquency systems, utilizing placement with relatives and service plans to protect and nurture the children. During the past two decades, the family group conference concept has been translated and implemented in countries across the globe. I cited Eva Rickard, a Maori Civil Rights leader, and in tribute quoted extensively from Dr. Martin Luther King, our moral spokesperson, who promoted the idea of “The Beloved Community,” based in love and a desire for social justice.

The presentation also explored the progress of IFCO in seeking social justice for children, through implementation of the United Nations’ Convention on Rights of the Child. Some examples of the achievements of IFCO-related agencies and organizations include the de-institutionalization of children in Eastern European orphanages; the development of foster and kinship care systems to serve the children; the international transfer of knowledge such as family group conferences, foster parent training, or systemic training about attachment and the impact of separation; development of foster homes to serve children rescued from international sex trafficking in Asia; and the development of culturally specific foster care systems to serve oppressed indigenous populations such as First Nations, Aboriginal and Native American children.

Following the speech, I had the pleasure of reconnecting with many people I had worked with over the past 20 years since my first trip to New Zealand. I had spent the summer of 1987 working for the New Zealand Foster Care Federation, traveling from *marae* (tribal meeting place) to *marae*, and speaking at *hui*s, (Maori convocations, called to discuss the fate of their children in foster care). I had also returned other times to speak at conferences, and once to lead a team of child welfare experts from the US who studied the legal and social aspects of family group conferences and the *Children and Young Persons Act*. I met the nephew of Eva Rickard, the Maori Civil Rights leader, who told me his *whanau* (extended family) would be thrilled by the tribute to his Aunt Eva and the comparison with Dr. King.

An acquaintance I made in New Zealand was Maria Soledad de Franco, the IFCO coordinator for Latin America. She immediately invited me to speak at the Latin American regional network meeting, co-sponsored by IFCO with UNICEF

and the CEPAS foundation. It seems that Latin America is on the brink of a transformational shift, just as New Zealand was twenty years ago when I spoke at the *maraes*. Latin America has not used foster care as a significant resource in the past, and in most countries children's services are non-existent or are limited to institutions which are not government-monitored. Problems that have faced children--often the result of sheer poverty--are homelessness, (street children who in some countries such as Brazil are being murdered by vigilantes); sex trafficking; child soldiers in several civil wars; the stealing or sale of children for international adoption; as well as malnutrition, lack of education and lack of health care. Now Latin American countries are in the process of implementing the *Convention on Rights of the Child*. In order to do so, each country is developing legislation for a child protection system and coordinated children's services.

In May 2007 I headed to Mar del Plata, Argentina for the IFCO Latin American Network meeting for yet another encounter with international child welfare. I was intimidated by my lack of Spanish proficiency. As the conference was completely in Spanish, except for my presentation, and that of the IFCO President (from Ireland), I had an assigned translator, a professor from the local university.

Every country in South and Central America was represented by diverse professionals, including child psychiatrists, psychologists, executives from children's agencies, child's rights attorneys and advocates, UNICEF officials, government specialists, professors, child care staff, and many social workers. In my thirty years of attending professional conferences, I have never seen such an involved audience. Although the presentations consisted of lectures from 8:30 in the morning until 8:00 in the evening, the audience was attentive, engaged, and present. No one left for shopping or an afternoon at the beach—they took notes, asked questions, and heard many speakers from all over the region. I did two presentations, one a plenary on "Global Perspectives on Foster Care", and another less formal presentation entitled "The Sibling Bond Across the Life Cycle." Following the second presentation I did a brief staffing with a Mexican child psychiatrist about a pending plan to split siblings for adoption, which he then realized would be a mistake. The global perspective I provided was helpful in the general decision-making to opt for family foster homes rather than institutions.

Two informal conversations helped me to generate an important decision. One conversation was with a child's rights attorney from Buenos Aires who wanted to study for a social work degree on practice with children in the US. The other was with a UNICEF official from Guatemala—an American—who wanted to bring American social workers to assist in the child welfare transformation in her country. I have decided to establish "The International Child Welfare Scholarship" for the master's of social work program at the Grand Valley State University. The scholarship will enable students from developing countries to come to our campus to learn about child welfare, or conversely help one of our child welfare students to study and do field work abroad. I thank Grand Valley for all the support over the years, with either funding or time to speak and learn in countries as diverse as Argentina, Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, England, France, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, Sweden, and Wales. I have been enabled to contribute my time and energy to a cause very dear to my heart, and to work at creating a "Beloved Community" for children that transcends all national boundaries.

October 1

Faculty/Staff Exchange Application Deadline

Faculty/Staff Exchange Grant Recipients

Lisa Gullo, Kingston University

Gary Stark, Cracow University of Economics

Connie Ingham, University of Oslo

Frank Pleban, University of Cape Coast

Barbara Roos, Middle East Technical University

Vandana Pednekar-Magal, Macquarie University

Student Scholarship/Grant Recipients

American Institute for Foreign Studies

(AIFS) Scholarship: Stephanie Sheppard

Arcadia University Scholarship:

Sherrisse Thomas

Australearn Scholarship: Stephanie Din-nocenzo

Barbara H. Padnos International Scholars:

Tshering Bhutia, Princess Braxton-Davis,

John Smieska, Andrea Vanderkolk

CEA Scholarship: Shelby Wittenbach

Freeman-ASIA: Amanda Petit

Galassi-Beria Scholarship: Kate Allen

Gilman International Scholarship:

Jamar Ahmad II, Nafeesa Pimpleton,

Stephanie Sander

Japan Business Society of Detroit Scholar-

ship: Jon Pontius

JASSO: Renee Dattadeen

Mark A. Murray Scholarship:

Nafeesa Pimpleton

Scholarship Funds Poland Study

By Michele Coffill

At Jagiellonian University in Poland, Grand Valley State University students Ryan Locke and Christian Goedel are learning one of the world's most difficult languages with people from Germany, Hungary, Italy, Iran and other countries.

Both students earned full scholarships from the Polish Ministry of Education and the Kosciuszko Foundation of New York City to study for the 2006-7 academic year in Cracow, Poland. The scholarship pays for their education and living expenses, plus provides a monthly stipend. The foundation is a Polish-American organization that strives to enhance relations between the two countries. Of the six scholarships it awarded last year, two went to Grand Valley students.

Locke, from Spring Lake, graduated last year with a bachelor's degree in liberal studies. He had studied abroad in Prague, Czech Republic, and said he developed a strong interest in Eastern European art and history. "I applied because I wanted the experience of studying abroad again, and living abroad, which is much different from just traveling," Locke said. "So far, it has been incredible; I am learning so much, meeting so many people from different countries and traveling."

Goedel, who has a double major in marketing and international business, said he took Polish language classes at Grand Valley and wanted to learn more about the country's culture. "I wanted to gain a firm grasp and understanding of Polish, which is by far one of the most difficult subjects I have ever studied," said Goedel, from Sebawaing. "I also wanted to learn and understand a culture completely different from my own."

Locke and Goedel live together with another American in one of the dorms at Jagiellonian University, which is Poland's oldest university and the alma mater of Pope John Paul II.

Student Wins German Scholarship

By Mary Isca Pirkola

Reginald Oates said he was shocked to learn he was accepted to participate in the 2007-08 Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (CBYX). From 500 exceptional candidates, only 75 were chosen for the work-study program in Germany, sponsored by the U.S. State Department and the German government. "I didn't think it would happen for me," said Oates. "After studying hard and waiting tables, I'm honored to be chosen for this unique opportunity."

Oates earned his bachelor's degree in political science from Grand Valley in 2005 and is working on a master's degree in public administration with an emphasis in criminal justice. He also works as a graduate research assistant in the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership.

The CBYX scholarship exchange program, which started in 1983, is designed for those interested in business, engineering, technical and agricultural fields who demonstrate good communication skills, diplomacy, and a strong sense of American identity. Oates said he hopes to study government and work at the state or federal level in Germany. The program is a reciprocal exchange; 75 Germans will be studying in the United States in 2007-08.

Oates said Grand Valley's approach to liberal education helped him find his passion for politics and government relations. "I originally came to Grand Valley to study biology," he said. "After a few classes in politics and international relations, I changed the focus of my studies. The one-on-one attention I received from faculty and staff helped me personally and professionally."

The 24-year-old Flint native left for Germany in July. The 12-month program consists of two months of intensive German language training in Germany, four months of classroom instruction at a German university or college of applied sciences, and a five-month internship in the participant's career field.

"My dream is to work in governmental policy development," he said. "This experience is an important step in helping me achieve that goal." To learn more about CBXY visit www.cdsintl.org/cbyx

Political Science Student Earns Study Abroad Scholarship

Political science student Erik Nelson is studying abroad in Jordan, digging up the past and hoping it helps the future. Nelson, who participated back-to-back in GVSU's Intensive Arabic Language program, directed by Dr. Majd Al-Mallah, and GVSU's Jordan Field School, directed by Dr. Bethany Walker, was one of three students nationally to receive the prestigious Jennifer Groot Undergraduate Scholarship from the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR). The \$1,500 scholarship was given based on his research proposal addressing the exercise of power in medieval Jordan. Nelson competed with graduate students and was the only undergraduate nationwide to win.

"The dig is an interesting experience because it allows me to actually look at the past, to pick up history and touch it," he said. "There is no greater thrill than finding something that has been lost for hundreds of years." He said he's learned a lot about Middle East culture and history through the dig. He hopes to take his experience and his Arabic language skills and meld them.

"I hope to learn about the history and culture of this region in order to use it in a positive way after I graduate. If I can use what I have learned to bridge the culture gap between the West and East, than this is clearly time well worth it," he said.

Student Wins AustralLearn Photo Contest

By Kat Davis

Photography major Kati Hart won the 2007 AustralLearn Photo Contest with her submission, "Camel Rides on Great Keppel Island".


Hart, a senior at GVSU, studied abroad in Australia at the University of Central Queensland through AustralLearn for the winter semester in 2006. She took her award-winning photo on a weekend trip in February to Great Keppel Island.



"I had received many compliments on many of my photographs that I took throughout my trip and decided to share some of them with those who would be able to relate and enjoy the same experiences that I had," said Hart.

Hart submitted two photos to the alumni photo contest and won first place from over 400 submitted photos. AustralLearn gave her *The Travel Book* by Lonely Planet worth \$50 as a prize. "I feel extremely honored. There were some pretty amazing photographs that were submitted," said Hart.

Hart's photo as well as other contest photos can be seen on AustralLearn's Alumni Photo Gallery site at <http://www.australearn.org/students/alumni/photogallery.htm>.



Fulbright U.S. Student Program Competition Opens

International Study or Research Grants and English Teaching Assistantships Now Available

www.us.fulbrightonline.org

New York, NY (May 1, 2007) - The Institute of International Education (IIE), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, is pleased to announce the launch of the 2008-2009 Fulbright U.S. Student Program competition.

For more than 60 years, the federal government-sponsored Fulbright U.S. Student Program has provided future American leaders with an unparalleled opportunity to study, conduct research, and teach in other countries. Fulbright student grants aim to increase mutual understanding among nations through educational and cultural exchange while serving as a catalyst for long-term leadership development.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program awards approximately 1,300 grants annually and currently operates in over 140 countries worldwide. Fulbright English Teaching Assistantships are now available to 26 countries. Fulbright full grants generally provide funding for round-trip travel, maintenance for one academic year, health and accident coverage and full or partial tuition.

Applicants to the Fulbright U.S. Student Program must be U.S. citizens at the time of application and hold a bachelor's degree or the equivalent by the beginning of the grant. In the creative and performing arts, four years of professional training and/or experience meets this basic eligibility requirement. (Professional applicants lacking a degree but with extensive professional study and/or experience in the field in which they wish to pursue a project may also be considered.) The Fulbright U.S. Student Program does not require applicants to be currently enrolled in a college or university. Applications from young professionals interested in an international experience are also encouraged to apply.

For more information, interested individuals should visit the Fulbright U.S. Student Program website at www.usfulbrightonline.org. Students currently enrolled at Grand Valley State University should contact the campus Fulbright advisor, Mary Albrecht, for more information. Applications must be submitted both electronically and in hard copy to the Provost's Office at

24 JHZ by the campus closing date of September 30, 2007, in order to be received by IIE electronically by October 19, 2007 and in hard copy by the October 22, 2007 national deadline.

Since its inception in 1946, the Fulbright Program has provided approximately 279,500 participants worldwide with the opportunity to observe each others' political, economic and cultural institutions, exchange ideas and embark on joint ventures of importance to the general welfare of the world's inhabitants. In the past 61 years, 105,400 students, scholars, and teachers from the United States have benefited from the Fulbright experience.

The Fulbright Program is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State. Financial support is provided by an annual appropriation from the United States Congress to the department of State and by participating foreign governments and host institutions in the United States and abroad. The Presidentially appointed J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board formulates policy guidelines and makes the final selection of all grantees.

The Institute of International Education administers and coordinates the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, including the annual competition for grants.



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PADNOS INTERNATIONAL CENTER

The mission of the Padnos International Center is to engage the community of Grand Valley State University in the development of meaningful international experiences which foster an appreciation and awareness of diverse cultures, people, and ideas.

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SUBMISSIONS

The bulk of *Global Connections* content is unsolicited. We continually seek content for publication. We welcome submissions in any language, and request that non-English submissions be accompanied by an English translation for co-publication. Editorials and letters to the editor must include the author's name and email address or phone number. Submissions can be sent via email (as an attachment) or post mail (as an electronic file on a floppy disk) to the editor. Submissions are due June 30 for the Fall semester edition and October 31 for the Winter Semester edition.

Photo of Ghanaian woman courtesy Renee Chouinard.