

Celebrating CHRIJ Co-director Brinton Lykes as she “Rewires”

On October 26th, the CHRIJ joined the BC Lynch School of Education and Human Development (LSEHD) to host a “rewirement” celebration to honor co-director Brinton Lykes’s decades of commitment and contributions to justice, activist scholarship, and education. This academic year, Lykes is transitioning out of her position as a full-time professor at BC, but will continue collaborations with organizations including the CHRIJ and the Martín-Baró Initiative (MBI) for Wellbeing and Human Rights at Grassroots International.

(Continued on page 2)



Brinton Lykes (second from R) with family members attending the celebration

AT A GLANCE

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Fall 2023 Events | 3-9 |
| Alumnus Profile | 10-11 |
| Summer Research Grants | 12-15 |

ABOUT US

The Center for Human Rights and International Justice addresses the increasingly interdisciplinary needs of human rights work through academic programs, applied research, and the interaction of scholars with practitioners. The Center’s Co-Directors are Law School Professor Daniel Kanstroom and Lynch School of Education and Human Development Professor of Community-Cultural Psychology M. Brinton Lykes. Mr. Timothy Karcz is the Assistant Director.

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(Continued from page 1)

The celebration event featured music from the ensemble Sol y Canto, and also included several speakers to share reminiscences of and reflections on work and friendship with Lykes over the years. Among them were Daniel Kanstroom, Professor of Law at BC Law School and co-director of the CHRIJ; Gilda Morelli, Associate Professor and Department Chair of Counseling, Developmental, and Educational Psychology at BC's LSEHD; and Ramsay Liem, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at BC and co-founder of the MBI along with Lykes. The various speakers and guests—colleagues, friends, former students, and family members of Lykes—reflected on her lasting influence and impact as an outstanding educator and pioneer of many activist and liberation movements. Due to her unwavering and ongoing commitment to international struggles for justice, Lykes titled the event a “rewirement” since those who know her know that she could never retire from fighting alongside those who live at the margins. Quoting Michelle Fine, a professor of critical psychology at the City University of New York, Liem said: “Brinton Lykes was decolonizing before it was cool. She was liberation theorist, feminist activist scholar, transnational intellectual muse before all of these things were avant garde.”

Lykes spent decades in Guatemala accompanying the Indigenous Maya Ixil and K'iche' communities of Chajul during and in the aftermath of the country's genocidal war. In addition to the speakers present at the event, the women she worked with during this time recorded a video thanking Lykes for her efforts in feminist community

action that continue to support them today. Marcie Mersky, one of Lykes' colleagues in Guatemala, sums up Lykes' work as being “framed by a constant and ongoing search to understand, to empower, and to heal.” Indeed, Lykes' time in Guatemala was notably characterized by her work with women in their communities to “assert their rights and demand recognition by others of their inherent dignity.”

Though the ways in which Lykes' legacy will carry on are evidently varied, her celebration carried a strong theme of her commitment to love, compassion, and justice. She ended the evening with reflections of her own, thanking all for pausing to be together and challenging us to reflect on the many ways in which our world remains in crisis. She notes that for many of us, ours “is not a time for celebration but of all too much grief and all too much rage.” Lykes hopes that her rewirement will allow her to continue to live amongst us all with greater flexibility and to have more time to listen deeply to stories from those who “invite us to unlearn and then to relearn from the diversities of being, doing and knowing that are emerging within a pluriverse.” She describes the pluriverse as an invitation to shift our thinking, one that moves us away from the idea that the universe and knowledges produced in “EuroUnitedStatesian” contexts are universal. Instead, the pluriverse recognizes that there are many different living systems and ways of “knowing-being-doing.” With deep gratitude, humility, and hope for the future, Lykes closed with a quote from Cornel West: “Justice is what love looks like in public.”



Brinton Lykes with former student Liliana Mamani Condori and family

Fall 2023 Events

Lessons from a global champion for preventing conflict-related sexual violence and the tireless fight for gender equity and justice

On September 6th, the Center hosted Jineth Bedoya Lima, a Colombian journalist and UN Global Champion in the Fight against Sexual Violence in Conflict. In 2021, Bedoya won a landmark decision by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights which ordered the state of Colombia to issue her an integral reparation after she suffered sexual violence while reporting the country's armed conflict in the early 2000s.

In her talk, "Lessons from a global champion for preventing conflict-related sexual violence and the tireless fight for gender equity and justice," Bedoya described her ongoing journey for justice and reparations for not only herself but the millions of women around the world who have experienced sexual violence. While her win in the Inter-American sphere has been an important milestone in her fight for Colombia to recognize and adequately address sexual violence, the state has still failed to award her these reparations. She described that while she is grateful to hold the sentencing of her abusers in her hand, she waited 23 years to do so. She questioned how many more years she will have to wait to receive the reparations she deserves.

Bedoya stressed that in our efforts to provide victims with the justice they deserve, we must be mindful of how this process can retraumatize them. She offered the example that in offering women the chance to share their stories, asking them to go far from their homes to do so, potentially going on an airplane for the first time in the process, women are not made to feel safer, but instead the opposite. Bedoya herself has experienced feeling deeply unsafe in experiences as simple as taking a cab alone in Boston to come speak at the event. She often asks herself if she will ever feel truly safe.

As a journalist, Bedoya has chosen to wield her craft and her voice to uplift the fight against sexual violence as it occurs around the world, often without the recognition it

deserves. She recognizes that while many other women have been silenced, her position has allowed her to push against the forces that seek to keep her and countless other women in the shadows.

In the case of Colombia's armed conflict, it was reported that there were 36,000 cases of women who experienced sexual violence, yet in her own investigation Bedoya found that that number was closer to 2 million. She asked the audience to reflect on the magnitude of harm caused by this conflict. These statistics demonstrate that sexual violence is not merely a consequence of conflict, but a weapon actively used to create greater harm.

(Continued on page 4)



Jineth Bedoya Lima

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Only once we acknowledge the central role of sexual violence in armed conflicts can we begin to address it in full. Beyond Colombia, conflicts in El Salvador, Iran, Ukraine, Nicaragua, and others, have failed to report on and draw attention to the magnitude of this issue. Bedoya addressed those in the room stating that each of them has the ability to create change, to investigate, to fight for victims of sexual violence. She argued that sitting in front of that room, she is proof that this is possible.

After Bedoya's talk moderator Katharine Young, a professor of law and Associate Dean for Faculty and Global Programs at BC Law, began with a question on where lawyers in this fight need to listen the most. Bedoya stressed the importance of lawyers in the process of justice as those she interacted with in her case made her feel as though what happened was her fault. They questioned her in-

vestigation and failed to fully investigate on their own, a central aspect of their responsibility in these cases.

A question from the audience asked Bedoya to consider how to keep the memory of these atrocities alive so that the younger generations are aware of the conflicts their communities have faced. She acknowledged the challenge of this as the older generations do not want to recount the harm they experienced and the younger generations do not want to listen. However the importance of historical memory is central to the struggle for justice as this process takes many years and oftentimes decades. To close, Bedoya highlighted the importance of remembering history so that we know where we came from to help prevent further atrocities and harm, and also to move towards healing from previous conflicts.

Students Facing Undocumentedness: Reflections from Personal Experiences and Finding Community through the UndocuNetwork Summit



Jonathan Mora

On September 22nd, the Center hosted a panel with Jonathan Mora, a BC senior and the recipient of the 2023 Saint Oscar Romero Scholarship, and Raquel Muñiz, an assistant professor of educational leadership and higher education and an assistant professor by courtesy at the BC law school.

In their talk, “Students Facing Undocumentedness: Reflections from Personal Experiences and Finding Community through the UndocuNetwork Summit,” Muñiz provided a factual background on the various legal and social challenges that come with being undocumented or living in a mixed-status family. Mora shared his own lived experience of growing up in a mixed-status community.

Muñiz began the talk with data on the population of undocumented students in the country, particularly those in higher education. There are currently 408,000 higher education students who are undocumented, which includes those with temporary DACA status. Muñiz described that undocumented students face a variety of challenges to attend college including barriers such as the inability to ac-

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

cess financial aid or a lack of knowledge about available resources.

Although three out of four undocumented students entered the United States at a young age, the majority of these students do not have DACA status. As there is virtually a complete lack of pathways to citizenship, these students continue to face barriers to access in their education.

Despite the variety of challenges faced by undocumented students, Muñiz presented that studies have found they bring high levels of resilience and determination to achieve, are highly engaged in their communities, and feel hopeful for their future in the United States.

Mora followed and began his presentation on his experience growing up in a family with different migration statuses. His parents immigrated from Mexico along with his older sister who was a young child at the time. Mora and his younger sister were born after their family's arrival to the United States, making them US citizens.

He also recounted a time in which he was asked to translate a legal document from someone close to his family. It was a notice that gave a date and time for a master hearing, which is part of the immigration removal process.

This was a turning point for him as it sparked his frustration with the legal process of migration, as the person's lawyer did not adequately explain to their client what the hearing meant for their migration status and the potential consequences. Mora realized then that he wanted to become an immigration lawyer as he had witnessed the pitfalls of the field firsthand.

In his junior year, Mora applied for the Oscar Romero

Scholarship, which he was subsequently awarded in 2023. His application pushed him to reflect on his experiences growing up in a mixed status community in which the threat of close friends or family being taken away was always looming, even if never explicitly stated. His sister's lack of citizenship had narrowed her access to higher education and made it so she was unable to graduate.

Mora was presented with the opportunity to attend the Ignatian Solidarity Network (ISN)'s UndocuSummit by Muñiz, and was able to attend in California in February 2023. When Mora met the other students at the summit, his status as a US citizen made him a minority within the group as most students did not enjoy that permanent legal status. Mora described feeling like he did not belong in the space and that he should not have been there, despite having been accepted to attend.

He leaned into his discomfort and realized that he was still able to relate to the stories and experiences shared by the other students. His position as an ally to those without documentation was shaped by the experiences of his parents, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles, all who had varying immigration statuses. At the end of the retreat, Mora felt much more comfortable in the space as his fellow participants had gone from strangers to people he considered his family.

Since then, Mora has become a core committee member for ISN's UndocuNetwork and is recruiting additional BC students to attend subsequent summits and to expand the network. He also stated his future goals to attend law school to learn immigration law and to be able to advocate for and support immigrants trying to establish a safe and stable life in the US, much like those in his community.

The Plural Worlds of Economic and Social Rights

On October 2nd, the Center hosted a panel discussion focusing on the interdisciplinary issue of economic and social rights. The panel was led by Malcolm Langford, a Professor of Public Law and Director of the Centre on Experiential Legal Learning at the University of Oslo, and Katie Young, the Associate Dean for Faculty and Global

Programs and Professor of Law here at Boston College. Langford and Young presented on their edited volume *The Oxford Handbook of Economic and Social Rights*, and co-moderated a panel featuring experts from different disciplines who contributed to it.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

The Handbook takes a pluralistic approach to the conversation of economic and social rights, featuring contributors across a variety of different disciplines and perspectives, a point which Young makes clear was highly intentional and essential to doing justice to the issue at hand. Economic and social rights are an inherently multifaceted phenomenon that cover a variety of different scopes, conceptions, ambitions, and contexts. Young and Langford’s work with the Handbook emphasizes the importance of plurality, as international rights is a constantly moving field based on a multiplicity of agenda frameworks and historical contexts. To base our conception of social rights purely in the current Western conception of the international human rights revolution risks ahistoricizing the field, as, according to Langford, “there’s a danger when you focus in on only one, you miss the underlying dynamics.” The book deals with a variety of conceptions of rights—philosophical to social to political to economic—as well as a variety of what they refer to as “agenda frameworks” for legal rights. The three main frameworks that have been traditionally accepted are the minimalist approach (striving to legalize the baseline and not overstepping beyond), the universalist approach (emphasizing personal social flourishing in a traditionally capitalist structure), and the egalitarian approach (focusing on what is right, just, and fair in a broader societal construct); the Handbook takes a critical approach to all three of these frameworks, and it broadens the conversation to include indigenous, environmental, and industrial critiques.

Following the discussion of the Handbook came the expert panel and Q&A session, featuring three key expert contributors: Sam Bookman, a SJD Candidate at Harvard Law School; Balakrishnan Rajagopal, an Associate Professor of Law and Development for the MIT

Department of Urban Studies & Planning and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing; and Lucie White, the Louis A. Horvitz Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. All three commented on the Handbook as it related to their specialized academic disciplines and personal scholarship as well as its greater contribution to the ongoing conversation surrounding the classification and prioritization of varying rights. The panelists spoke to the expansive framework of our current international human rights regime, economic and social rights as both an old and new problem, the remaining pitfalls of the post-colonial world order, and the importance of human rights scholars in the face of their consistent undervaluing and exploitation.

Bookman specifically discussed the Handbook as it relates to his work on the intersection between constitutional law and the growing field of environmental law and rights, while Rajagopal focused on the remaining structural barriers towards suitable housing and food sovereignty today. White spoke to the broader issues of domestic and international policy writ large, specifically highlighting the International Monetary Fund and World Bank’s contributions towards sustained structural inequality. White’s commentary drew particular interest from the audience, sparking a larger round of questions and conversation as to the potential short- and long-term solutions for equalizing the global, post-colonial economic order. All in all, the event provided the audience with invaluable insight into the much larger world of international rights scholarship and discourses occurring in the field of legal academia today and offered an exciting glimpse into the incredible work contained within the *The Oxford Handbook of Economic and Social Rights*.

Theorizing Violability

On November 3rd, the Center hosted a talk, entitled “Theorizing Violability,” with CHRIJ visiting scholar Kanishka Sikri. Sikri is a writer, scholar, and PhD candidate at York University. Her talk focused on some of her research topics regarding desire and how we might rethink violence as a process of violability. The main question surrounding her research and presentation was “how does [violability] operate?” Sikri sees violability through many lenses—as power channeled through violence, and as a language of metaphors, amongst many others.

Sikri works with the definitions of violence as a process or practice of violability and of violability as an ontological operating system that marks one’s being and becoming to routinize practices of violation. We can understand violability through what Avery Gordon calls “a haunting,” something that is gradual, slow, continual, less so something that is done and more so something one becomes. As such, human beings are not marked by violence, but by violability. Violence rather operates through us as a branch of violability. While violence functions materially,

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

violability functions ontologically.

Sikri is inspired by Stuart Hall's idea that cultural identity is always a matter of "becoming" as well as "being." Being refers to how one occupies space, land, culture, and bodies. Becoming considers how one takes shape, moves, amalgamates, and transforms. Sikri's own research focuses on how being turns into becoming. The centering of being and becoming as a combined idea calls for the use of ontology as a surface and a vector to understand where power operates. Violability operates through on-



Kanishka Sikri

tology via its material incarnation of violence.

We can understand this through the theorization of "the other." For Black scholars, this is often the slave. For Indigenous scholars, it is typically the savage. And for feminist scholars, the whore. Rather than being violated, these "others" are marked as something that can be violated. However, it is important to bear in mind that with this framing of violability, in terms of such identity politics, we blur the ultimate goal of recognizing the convergence and divergence of the textures that animate all human beings within the idea of violability.

Sikri is aware that her research on violability is very abstract, and in an effort to understand such a complex topic, she has had to accordingly develop abstract methods, which remain a work in progress. Center Co-director Brinton Lykes, who moderated the event, having spent much of her adult life working in contexts of violence, echoed the importance of struggling to find ways to talk about, think about, and write about violence outside of the onto-epistemological dualisms of Europe and the United States. Sikri's work takes on the crucial aim of moving beyond restrictive categories that prevent accurate representations of pain and suffering and subsequent processes of healing. As an activist-scholar herself, Lykes further noted how oftentimes, a lack of language results in taking action by categorizing and working within these harmful dualisms. Sikri's theory of violability necessarily complicates that action and shows promise for more effective and more just ways forward.

Center screens *What Lucía Saw* with guest commentary on contemporary Salvadoran social issues as part of annual commemoration

On November 14th, the Center hosted a film screening of the movie *Llegaron de Noche / What Lucía Saw* (2021), co-sponsored by the Martín-Baró Initiative for Wellbeing and Human Rights (MBI) at Grassroots International, Campus Ministry, and the BC Organization for Latin American Affairs. The event commemorated the 34th anniversary of the killings in El Salvador of the Jesuit leadership of the Central American University (UCA) and two

women who worked there. The film centers around the only witness to the murders, Lucía Barrera de Cerna, and documents her struggle to tell her own story and speak her truth amidst the ongoing Salvadoran civil war, as well as the US government's response to her testimony.

Professor Brinton Lykes, the Center's co-director and the co-founder of the MBI, offered a brief introduction to the

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

event and the contents of the film. The event holds special meaning for her, as a friend and colleague of one of the Jesuits killed, Ignacio Martín-Baró. His work in liberation psychology and theology generated an immense vision for change during his lifetime, and the MBI was founded after his passing to continue his great legacy. Lykes then presented the two speakers for the event: Ernesto Valiente, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at the School of Theology and Ministry; and Andrés Castro Samayoa, Associate Professor at Lynch School of Education and Human Development.

Valiente provided an overview of the historical context for the emergence of the Salvadoran civil war and the UCA's positioning during the conflict. He explained that the war originated in economic inequality and political illegitimacy. In 1970, after decades of fraudulent elections and political repression, citizens began forming alternative political organizations. Their activities triggered repressive measures which sparked the formation of leftist guerilla groups to combat state violence. In 1980, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) was created out of these groups and prepared for civil war.

Amidst the conflict, the UCA sought to represent the voice of the people and advocated for nonviolent solutions to the country's problems. They created the Center for

Information, Documentation, and Research to discover the public's true thoughts on the war, and they founded the Human Rights Institute in 1985 to document human rights violations. The government saw these actions as a threat, despite the UCA never declaring their allegiance to either side in the conflict. On November 16, 1989, paramilitary forces invaded the campus and killed the Jesuit priests and two female employees present.

After the film screening, Castro Samayoa opened a discussion surrounding the connection between El Salvador's past and its current political situation by reflecting on his own childhood there and his reactions to the film's depiction of Lucía's story. He invited the audience to share their own perspectives, and many attendees contributed valuable insights. Valiente sparked conversation around the state of democracy today and its value, and Lykes compared her knowledge of the current elections in Guatemala with the election of President Nayib Bukele in El Salvador. She questioned whether democracy actually appears to have "any commitment to undoing the structures of marginalization and oppression that exist," and Valiente summarized the comments of the evening by stating that "democracy is necessary but not sufficient." He concluded with a call to action, for us all to continue learning, organizing, and advocating for people's rights across the globe.

Tracing Homelands: Israel, Palestine and the Claims of Belonging

On December 5th, the Center hosted Linda Dittmar, the author of *Tracing Homelands: Israel, Palestine and the Claims of Belonging*, for a Book Talk event. Dittmar previously taught literature and film studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston for forty years, and had visiting lectureships in India, at Tel Aviv University, Tufts University, and the University of Paris. She has received two Fulbright awards, the second of which she received as a distinguished chair.

Tracing Homelands is part history, part travelog, and part memoir as through her writing, Dittmar explores her own upbringing in British Palestine, which would later become Israel, as well as the Nakba, an Arab word mean-

ing "catastrophe" used to refer to the mass expulsion of roughly 750,000 Palestinians to neighboring countries. As she grew older, she began to examine what she had witnessed as a child and how the intertwined effects of the Holocaust and the Nakba had come to shape her life and the country she called home.

The book explores the history of the Nakba as told through the physical landscape of Israel. She traces these seemingly unremarkable signs of Palestinian life, ruins, rocks, wells, and cacti, to discover the truth of her nation's history. Through the book, she sought to answer the question, whose homeland is it? Dittmar was ten years old when the War of 1948 erupted around her. She had lived near

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

a Palestinian village that one day ceased to exist; everyone was gone. “I did not know what that meant. I had no idea,” she said, reflecting on how she struggled to grasp the gravity of what was happening around her.

Dittmar’s work began while taking a scenic drive through Israel. She looked across the lush forest that spanned the left side of the road, with stones denoting contributions from Synagogues and Jewish communities abroad. The greenery came to an abrupt stop on the right side of the road as an expanse of rocks and dirt stretched across the horizon with a few faint lights visible in the distance. She realized that the lights were the occupied territory.

“I was driving on a road that had memorials of the Holocaust on one side and the town of Jenin in the occupied territories on the other,” said Dittmar. “It was just a horrible shock to see how they were side-by-side, the suffering of one next to the suffering of another.”

While as an adult, she was able to critically examine the history of Israel, she had grown up entrenched in Zionism, one that she clarified differs greatly from the Zionism of US Jews. At the age of fifteen, three years before

she would serve in Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) as all Israelis are required to do, she and her classmates were taken on a four-day hike through the desert that culminated with a steep climb to Mount Masada at dawn.

There they were told the story of Jewish soldiers who sacrificed themselves for the state on that very mountain when fighting the Romans. After being told of this powerful symbol of Jewish heroism, they swore their loyalty to the state, agreeing to give their lives if necessary, and received a Bible. “I mention this because I was completely, completely moved by this idea that we would give our lives to the country if needed,” Dittmar said. “I felt it and believed it with my whole heart. Waking out of that to see the Nakba was a very difficult experience.”

She finished her talk with an excerpt from her book in which she described how she was “steeped” in the national narrative of becoming, conquests, and exiles including the events of the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust. Her final remark to the audience was on the continuous nature of the violence: “we know that a child of an abuser is likely to abuse the next generation. Both Israelis and Palestinians are both trauma ridden.”



Linda Dittmar

Alumnus Profile

CHRIJ Alumnus David Kwon and the Importance of Ethics, Peacebuilding, and Moral Academia

David Chiwon Kwon received the Certificate in Human Rights and International Justice in 2014 and since has gone on to an impressive career of teaching and research in ethics and theology. He earned a PhD in Moral Theology from Boston College and he also holds an MBA from Johns Hopkins University and degrees in Social Work and Social Policy and an MDiv from the University of Chicago. Kwon draws on this wide array of educational experiences in these fields in his current work as a social ethicist and theologian incorporating analyses of intersectionality in his work. From 2018 to 2023, Kwon worked as an Assistant Professor of Moral Theology at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, becoming a core faculty member of Saint Mary's health humanities program in 2020 and being recognized with the college's Student Senate teaching award in 2021. Kwon then took a position at Seattle University as an Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies in the fall of 2023. He has expressed his excitement about the beautiful Seattle scenery and joining the wonderful Seattle community, particularly the Jesuit Seattle University community.

Kwon says he finds himself “at home” within the mission, religious scholarship, and higher education culture of the Jesuits. He is excited to be at an institution like Seattle University which has, much like he fondly remembers at BC, a strong commitment to its Jesuit mission, a solid religious and interdisciplinary studies program, and an emphasis on the core values of social justice and the common good. Kwon has a deep passion for ethics and theology, embracing the “moral dimension of the Christian life” and valuing education that emphasizes critical thinking through faith and reason, following the Jesuit model of forming students not just as future employees but also as persons. It is important for him to guide his teachings with the “real world” in mind, and he looks to draw on his intersectional experience as an Asian-American immigrant to the US and a “member of an emerging minority group within the Catholic theological guild,” in



David Chiwon Kwon

the hopes of teaching, advising and mentoring the diverse student body at Seattle U. His joint degrees and diverse experiences allow him to “appreciate the value of diversity and actively involve [himself] in community organization,” and he has become a sought-after speaker on the intersection of faith and racial justice at university and community events.

Kwon's key areas of teaching and research focus on the ethics of peace, business and environmental ethics,

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

health care ethics, and, more recently, gender and racial justice—all of which he endeavors to approach from a global, intercultural perspective, drawing on his background as an expert in Western and Asian (specifically Korean) institutions, approaches, and philosophical practices. At Saint Mary's, he served on the university-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) taskforce and led bimonthly events, known as the Diversity Cafe, in which students discussed with faculty topics relating to DEI issues. In his recent transition to Seattle U., Kwon has been eager to continue including these values in his educational philosophy, focusing on encouraging students to attend to their own identity formation and preparing for three new justice-minded courses: "Social Justice and Christian Ethics," "Methods in Theology and Religious Studies," and a developing course about environmental justice and sustainability emphasizing themes in the papal encyclical *Laudato Si'*. His first book, *Justice after War: Jus Post Bellum in the 21st Century*, was published by Catholic University of America Press in the summer of 2023. The book functions as a theologically inspired introductory text in *jus post bellum* (i.e. postwar justice and peace) ethics. The book is geared primarily toward just war thinkers and peace scholars, but is also appropriate for those of a general audience and is expected to appeal to advanced undergraduate and graduate students in departments of interdisciplinary theology or religious studies. Balancing an active family and extracurricular life, Kwon says he can often be found involved in research of some form, whether it be publications, grant projects, or teaching preparation, and he is currently actively involved in a yearlong teaching and learning workshop with a grant for early career faculty of Asian descent at the Wabash Center.

Kwon firmly believes that the most pressing ethical concern today is peacebuilding, a theme which he has tackled in great lengths throughout his career and learned a great deal about during his time at the CHRIJ. When deciding to pursue his doctoral studies, Kwon realized quickly that BC was the right place for him with its "socially aware, culturally diverse, and personally and socially transforming experience-centered classes dealing with both human rights and community engagements" in an interdisciplinary way. The CHRIJ certificate program was a central piece to this, with Kwon asserting that for "anyone who studies/teaches moral theology/theological ethics, whether they are religious or not, [the program]

would help them attend to human dignity and human rights issues in a holistic manner, bring[ing] them to both intellectual and spiritual growth, and becoming considerably more prepared for post-graduate life." He heralded the CHRIJ certificate program with helping him develop a critical mind, character development, virtue formation, and the ability to engage in civil society building discourse, and he loved how the program offers "more than just analytical tools and resources," as it is shaped by the values of *cura personalis* and *magis* that are at the core of the "transformative power of a Jesuit education." As a teacher-scholar, he has sought to nurture, empower, and apply this philosophy of an ethical life of service to his work, teaching, and leadership, embracing three key elements in his pedagogy of human rights practice: nurturing questions of faith and morality, following an inductive approach, and remaining mission focused.

In addition to all the valuable life, academic, and professional skills he gained from his time at the CHRIJ, Kwon looks fondly back at his time at BC and the connections he made there, celebrating the bonds with his fellow CHRIJ certificate recipients that he maintains to this day. Describing his "favorite fond time as *now*," explaining that he is "so happy to witness [how] many of my classmates/the CHRIJ certificate fellows have impacted on their own places to promote human rights in various fields of business and society" as they all embrace their own version of the "good life." In this vein, he encourages everyone—current students, Center participants, and beyond—to pursue their own "good life" and to try and expose themselves to real life contexts, especially outside of the classroom. When you learn in community and in action, you can find the space within yourself for the greatest change and growth, and the most valuable way to live is to "be teachable, be active, and be proactive." He emphasizes that one should never hesitate to ask, otherwise, you will never learn, and, though one person cannot change the whole world, when we come together to learn, work, and grow, we can endeavor to make a more meaningful, collective difference.

Kwon returns to BC on April 4, 2024 to present his new book at a lunchtime event. Check out the CHRIJ website for details and to RSVP.

Summer Research Grant Reports

Una Examinación del Régimen de Excepción: A Critical Examination of Nayib Bukele's State of Exception

Owen Fletcher, International Studies, MCAS '25

Fletcher traveled to El Salvador in July of 2023 to investigate the country's unique political situation under the state of exception implemented by President Nayib Bukele in March 2022. The state of exception suspends certain constitutional rights in particular situations, such as wartime or territorial invasion, as part of Bukele's Territorial Control Plan, which seeks to eradicate gangs in the country. However, Fletcher finds that the state of exception negatively impacts marginalized groups by removing their constitutional rights as well.

While some might assert that eliminating gangs serves the greater good of the people by preserving their safety, Fletcher notes that there has only been a slight reduction in the population's feelings of fear since the state of exception was implemented. Moreover, the government has increased its arrests of those they suspect of gang involvement without concrete evidence, and it has lengthened sentences for adolescents in the name of deterrence. Importantly, the government controls the flow of information and media surrounding the policies' implementation and reception.

Fletcher reports that 63% of Salvadorans see economic factors as the country's main problem. In order to achieve economic growth, the country must move beyond its basic campaign of gang imprisonment. Fletcher believes the institution of the Catholic Church offers a way forward due to its special legal position in the country. He examines the life of Monsignor Óscar Romero, the archbishop of San Salvador during the civil war who was assassinated in 1980, for his role in "accompanying" the people. He argues that the

church must allow others like Romero to speak out against the injustices suffered under the state of exception.

Ultimately, Fletcher hopes that the church's criticism will help compel the government to reevaluate the harm its policy has caused not only to marginalized groups, but to the country as a whole as it faces difficult economic and political realities.



Owen Fletcher

The Role of Love in International Student Migration: Feminist Critical Policy Analysis of the Immigration Policy for F-2 Spousal Visas in the United States

Asuka Ichikawa, PhD candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership and Higher Education, Lynch School of Education and Human Development

Ichikawa's grant went towards the design and implementation of the first phase of data collection for her doctoral dissertation project exploring the lived migratory experiences of the spouses of international students in the United States on F-2 spousal visas. The first phase included the literature review and the interviewing of five Boston-area research participants. In writing the literature review, Ichikawa notices the absence of a human rights perspective in her research topic, specifically in spouses' rights to education and employment as well as in an overall lack of gender-sensitivity in the existing policies. As an extension to her research topic, Ichikawa adds a consideration of the meaning of "love" in the context of global migration.

For the interview process, Ichikawa employs an institutional ethnography strongly influenced by critical feminist perspectives to closely examine the interactions between participants' lived experiences, intersectional identities, and immigration policies. Ichikawa herself was once a spouse on an F-2 visa in New York City, and though she does not seek absolute objectivity as a result, she relies on qualitative research to create a perspective that lies between both that of an insider and of an outsider to this research topic.

Though interviews are ongoing, Ichikawa finds that the restrictions of F-2 visas shape the voluntary domestication of spouses. Additionally, spouses are deemed to be taking on the emotional labor of attending to the psychological needs of their partners and are displaying a long-term sense of uncertainty for their futures. In considering institutional methods to support the well-being of international couples, Ichikawa recommends that



Asuka Ichikawa

international offices at higher education institutions establish a direct method of communication with the international spouses rather than the students alone. She identifies this as a key aspect of the greater need for international offices to have open and approachable relations with the whole international community, including spouses.

Imagining Freedom Under Occupation: “Free Palestine” in Rhetoric, Art, and Action

***Barbara Anne Kozee, PhD candidate in Theology, MCAS
2023 Kelsey Rennebohm Fellow***

Kozee’s research centered around the phrase “Free Palestine” and how its rhetorical function translates into meaningful community action. Looking at rhetoric, memory, narrative, history, art, religion, and activism, Kozee investigated the Free Palestine movement through the lens of global human rights and generational action. The research was conducted primarily through the medium of analyzing photographs taken of Palestinian artwork, placing an emphasis on the imagining of freedom and the importance of cultural perseverance.

Kozee’s findings fell under three main categories of imagining freedom: human dignity and justice, global solidarity and social transformation, and the tension between remembering victims, validating suffering, and empowering younger generations. Through the lens of human dignity, Kozee looked at the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem and a particularly poignant image known as the “Key of Return” that is painted on its walls. As more than 5,000 Palestinian refugees reside in the camp today, the image remains a powerful stance on freedom and oppression, referencing U.N. resolutions in hopes to highlight the ongoing violations of human dignity in Gaza. Within the theme of global solidarity, images throughout the world depicting human suffering, liberation, oppression, and power paint an international picture of the Palestinian struggle. Kozee draws on images from the Berlin Wall, the Black Lives Matter protests, and Apartheid to highlight how the Palestinian occupation and desire for freedom is a universally human story. Finally, Kozee found the interplaying themes of victims, suffering, and hope to be pervasive throughout all the community organizations studied. By analyzing the border wall as a “living and responsive political space,” the work of artists to turn the wall into a place of action and power becomes illuminated.



Barbara Anne Kozee

By taking an ethnographic approach to studying the “social ethics, human rights, and moral agency in the context of Israel-Palestine,” Kozee has used her research to imbue a deeper cultural understanding into the conversation of freedom under what many have characterized as occupation.

Containment as a Public Health Response: Consequences and Lessons Learned from the West Africa Ebola Outbreak of 2014-2016

Oladoyin Okunoren, PhD candidate, School of Social Work

In her research, Okunoren explored the perspectives and understandings of containment measures implemented during the Ebola outbreak in Freetown, Sierra Leone between 2014 and 2016. Specifically, she sought to understand better how Ebola survivors — both infected and affected — and healthcare workers employed during the outbreak understood the function and effects of the containment measures on psychosocial well-being and human rights practices.

Okunoren interviewed 21 Ebola survivors and 20 healthcare survivors for the study. She initially intended to examine the concept of securitization of outbreaks, which tends to focus on outbreaks more as a security crisis than a humanitarian one, potentially adding additional psychosocial harm to the health effects of the outbreak. She also wanted to explore what effect the imposition of containment measures originating from Western cultures and international health organizations might be having vis-à-vis local cultural practices and whether friction arising from that dynamic limited their effectiveness. As such, she asked the interviewees about experiences with quarantine, isolation in Ebola treatment centers, mass burial, and other containment measures.

From the responses and her experiences in the country, Okunoren came away with the idea that it is crucial to employ a systems perspective in the overall analysis of the issue by considering the implications of “poverty, weak health systems, gender inequities, and more,” beyond tending to the acute health effects of disease outbreaks.

As she continues this work as part of her dissertation, she wants to explore interventions that go beyond the duration of the outbreak to address the more embedded issues affecting people in Sierra Leone, working with key stakeholders in society to create more effective and durable solutions for people to rebuild their lives with long after outbreaks subside.



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