

# EVERY STEP



*Wellesley College  
Peace and Justice Studies Department  
Program Newsletter  
Fall 2019*

*"You can jail a revolutionary, but you  
can't jail a revolution."*

*- Fred Hampton*



# RESIST!

## Welcome!



Happy Autumn from the Peace and Justice studies faculty! As the new co-chair of the Peace and Justice Studies program along with Larry Rosenwald, I can attest to a busy fall semester after a quiet summer of research and family time. We are surely missing the leadership and friendship of Catia Confortini while she enjoys a Fulbright Faculty award in Finland.

This semester, I am teaching PEAC 104, Introduction to Peace and Justice Studies for the first time. It has been a particularly meaningful experience to have a course filled with mostly first and second year students that are encountering terms like structural violence, positive peace, and social justice for the first time. Their enthusiasm is contagious and reinvigorates my own understanding of our field of study and my research.

This semester, we are reading Bryan Stevenson's (2016) book, *Just Mercy*, as a companion to more theoretically grounded academic articles. Excitingly, it was announced that the book has been produced into a movie, available in theaters in December 2019. In the book, *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson contemplates the challenges of the American judicial system and the harsh punishments that we mete out that offer no hope for redemption to the most outwardly broken- the mentally ill, the drug addicted, the abused, the criminals, the "illegals"- in our society. He hints at how we might overcome the brokenness of our world and the fracturing of our communities. He poignantly shares, "There is no wholeness outside of our reciprocal humanity" (Stevenson 2016, 290). The act of reciprocity or the extension of privileges, favors, and services to others with little prospect for material reward in return is one pathway to greater social justice in the world. Reciprocity keeps us connected, even if by only a thread, even in the most broken of circumstances. Building on Stevenson's lessons, I hope we all endeavor to serve the needs of others in big and small ways at home, at work, in class, and in mundane encounters.

In the rest of the newsletter, I think you will enjoy reading about about the ways our majors, alumna, and faculty are furthering their study of peace and putting into action social justice.

*"We will no longer negotiate for our existence." - Fadumo Dayib*

# RESIST!

## Update from Professor Catia Confortini

### *Terveisiä Tampereelta (Greetings From Tampere)!*



**December 6, 2019**

I have been spending my semester-long sabbatical in Finland, thanks to a Fulbright Finland Foundation Scholarship and my long-standing collaboration with colleagues of the Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI) of Tampere University. Founded in 1969 with an act of Parliament, TAPRI is one of the leading peace research institutes in the world, home to some of the most important critical and feminist voices in peace studies. TAPRI offers a Master of Science as well as a doctoral program in peace and conflict studies (any interest, Wellesley P&J students and alums?).

For quite a few years now, I have been working with Tiina Vaittinen of the School of Global Health and Development at Tampere University: together we have completed an edited volume entitled *Gender, Global Health, and Violence: Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Disease*. The book – just published by Rowman and Littlefield International -- has been a collective and cross-disciplinary research project. Our authors examined the entanglements of different kinds of violence from a number of perspectives, dealing with subjects as varied as AIDS activism in South Africa, waria (transgender individuals) in Indonesia, the work of the Center for Victims of Torture in the US, and others. Our aim has been to uncover whether and how global health interventions remedy or contribute to harm in our societies. We argue that only by understanding the entanglements of different forms of violence (personal, structural, symbolic, etc.) can we begin to find ways to eliminate them.

The other project that brought me here is editing the *Handbook of Feminist Peace Research*. In this, I am accompanied by Tarja Väyrynen, director of TAPRI, and Élise Féron a senior scholar here as well. Our two other co-editors, Swati Parashar and Peace Medie, are located respectively at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and at Bristol University (UK) and University of Ghana. The handbook, under contract with Routledge, provides an overview of an approach to peace studies that we call critical feminist peace research. The idea first originated with a network of scholars who met in Tampere a few years ago, and to Tampere I came back to continue working and writing to complete the manuscript.

*“Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them.” - Assata Shakur*

# RESIST!!

Besides these two projects I have also been establishing collaborations and writing side-by-side with academics from a variety of social science disciplines, as well as those from the School of Global Health and Development, to explore topics at the intersection of Peace Research, Feminist Theory, and Global Health. Finally, I have taught a class on Gender, War, and Peacebuilding for the MA students at Tampere University.

But more than the research and collaborations it has spurred, my sabbatical has been fulfilling at a personal level too. I developed new friendships and nurtured old ones, not least those with my colleagues from the Fulbright cohort. I visited the US embassy, gave thanks with Finnish and American friends in the home of another Fulbright scholar, saw incredible art and architecture, fed reindeer, was awed by Aurora Borealis, and participated in the Helsinki's Climate March



*Feeding Reindeer!*



*Helsinki's Climate March!*



*Going to the U.S. Embassy!*



*Aurora Borealis!*

*"There comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness . . . that time is now."*

*— Wangari Maathai*

# RESIST!!

Thanks to Fulbright, I lived in and learned about a fascinating and beautiful country, its history, culture, and language. Finland has a painful history of civil war, invasion, and settler colonialism (in the territory of the Sámi people), but also a fascinating language (Ugro-Finnic – like very few in Europe), incredible food, top-notch education (literacy is at 100% and most Finns speak very good English), and friendly though quiet people who know how to be happy even during the long winter days/nights (at the moment of writing there are only 5 hours of light a day). They love their forest (which make up 78% of their territory), their 188,000 lakes, their berries and mushrooms (delicious!!!), and their winter sports. Coffee here is not so good, but surprisingly Finns drink more coffee per capita than any other country in the world. To say that they are not as exuberant as Italians is an understatement, but I have been loving the quietness around me for a change. And Finns taught me the difficult art of work-life balance: neither my colleagues nor my students here work on weekends (that includes no emails) or for the entire month of July, they all take actual lunch breaks, and work regular office hours.

My favourite thing to do has been going to sauna at least twice a week (did you know that sauna is a Finnish word?). With 5.5 million inhabitants, Finland is home to 3.2 million saunas, but Finnish sauna is like no other: it is almost a spiritual experience, where Finns share a crowded space, chat, share a beer (and a makkara – a sausage), and shed the weight of the day. With the oldest public sauna in Finland (Rajaportti) and over 30 public saunas in the region (not to mention the thousands private ones), Tampere is the self-appointed sauna capital of the world. At sauna, you sit naked or wearing a swimsuit as much time as you can resist on wooden benches in a hot room (90-100 degrees Celsius). The stones on top of the wood-burning stove are sprinkled from time to time with water to create more steam (and more heat). When you can no longer take the heat, you go out and dip in the lake. If you are brave, you can swim a bit. In the winter you dip (or swim, if you dare) in the avanto, the hole in the ice. Once you are done with that, you go back to sauna. And then repeat as many times you want. There's nothing like sauna to relax you and shed your worries. It may be the thing I will miss most of this beautiful country.

*"Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another"*

*- Toni Morrison*

# RESIST!

## *Alexis Rivett*

### *Double Major in Peace and Justice Studies and Education Studies*

This summer I traveled to Beirut, Lebanon to be a Programs Intern at Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP). ULYP is a nonprofit that provides educational services to Palestinian and Syrian refugees who live in Lebanon. During this internship, I worked with a diversity of people teaching English, co-writing grant applications, and analyzing the success of ULYP's educational programs.

This internship taught me about the role of nonprofits in a refugee's education in Lebanon and inspired me to continue teaching and researching how educational services can be improved. This internship reinforced the concept that education is impacted by a student's environment and that in order for education to be successful, factors of poverty, war, conflict, and food security must be taken into consideration.

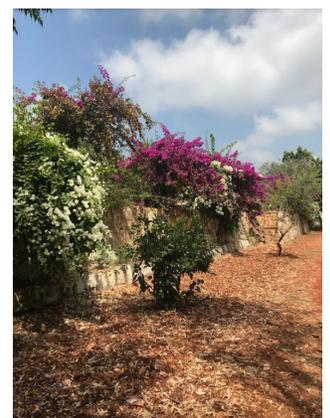
Saying this experience changed my life is an understatement. Before completing this internship, I had very little travel experience and had never lived on my own. During this experience, I immersed myself in a different culture and was in a setting where I could apply my multidisciplinary coursework. Professors Catia Confortini and Nadya Hajj inspired me to apply to intern at ULYP. The intimacy of Wellesley classes allowed both Professors Confortini and Hajj to learn about my passions and what I wanted to do after I graduated. Both of them knew that I was interested in an internship where I could work with refugees and apply my coursework, particularly surrounding my Peace and Justice studies emphasis, Educational Equity. They directed me to ULYP and encouraged me to apply. Being awarded the Emily Greene Balch stipend ensured that I could actually accept this internship position. Without this stipend, I could have never dreamed of accepting such an opportunity because of my financial background.



*"You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time." - Angela Davis*

# RESIST!

Despite that the internship ended over the summer, the Peace & Justice department is still supporting my learning through the Peace 250H experimental component course. With the guidance of an advisor, I have been able to individually reflect on my experiences in Lebanon and relate them to my Peace & Justice coursework. This work has inspired me to keep studying for my teaching license so that I can continue teaching in marginalized communities. My Peace & Justice coursework has enabled me to teach with a more open-minded, social justice framework that in turn, allows students to embrace their uniqueness in the classroom. I'm incredibly grateful for this continued support. Because of it, I've become a better student, teacher, and human being that is more prepared for work after graduating Wellesley.

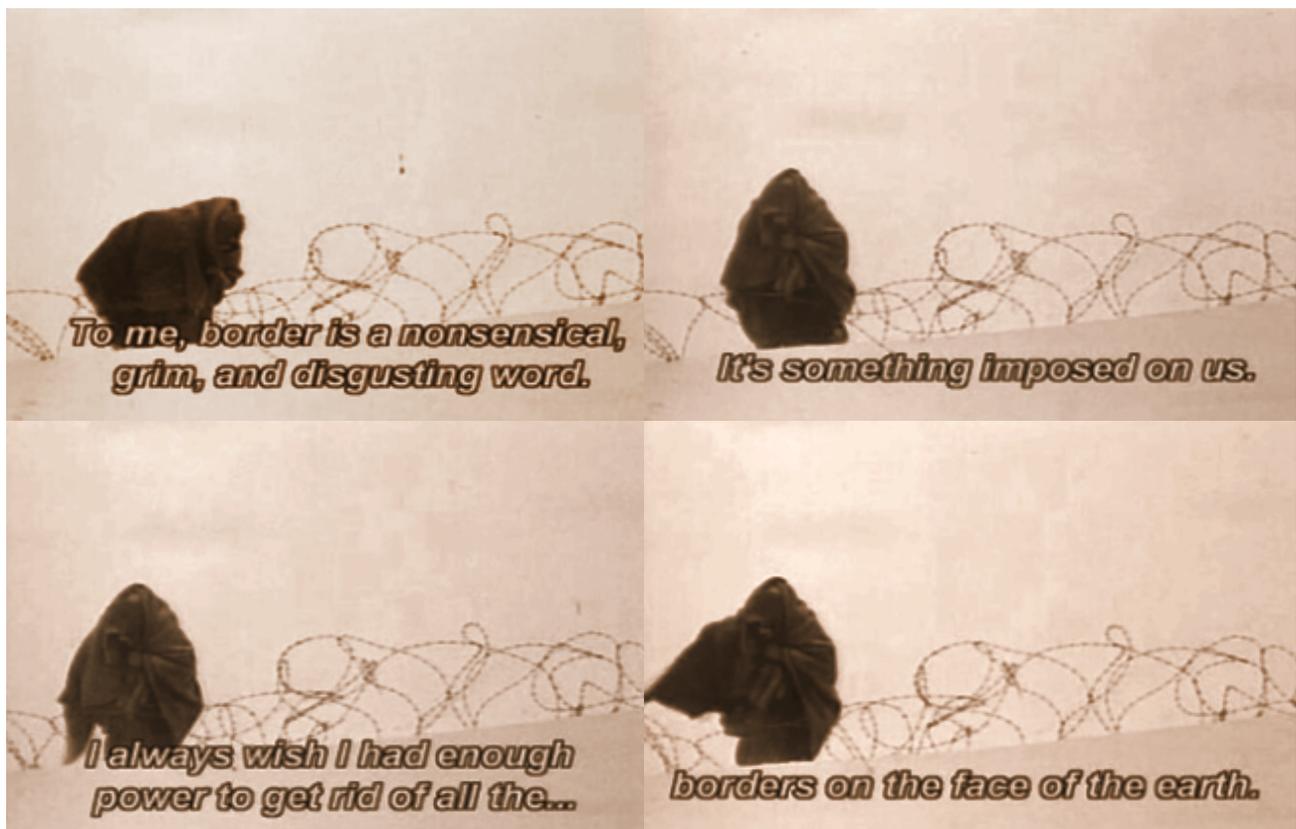


*“The movement is contagious, and the people in it are the ones who pass on the spirit.”*

*— Yuri Kochiyama*

# RESIST!

*Kurdish director, Bahman Ghobadi, on borders*



*"This world's not going to change unless we're willing to change ourselves."*

*- Rigoberta Menchu*

# RESIST!

*Laïssa Alexis*

*Peace and Justice Studies Major With A Concentration in  
International Human Rights*



As a peace and justice studies major, structural violence has become part of my lexicon to the annoyance of those around me. When I first encountered the term in my introduction to peace and justice studies course I was amazed at its utility and annoyed at the fact that I had never heard it used before. As I get ready to enter the “real” world as a “real” adult, I have been thinking a lot about what I need to be doing in order to help dismantle systems of oppression.

In part, because of this ambition, I am writing my honors thesis in P&J on the African Union and its enforcement of human rights. The African Union (AU) is an intergovernmental organization that seeks to promote solidarity and unity among African States. The organization was originally called the Organization of African Unity (OAU) until it was revamped as the AU in 2002. One of the major changes of the AU from the OAU was the focus on human rights. The original OAU began as a decolonizing, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist, pan-African project, something that the AU continues to proclaim. But in many ways, the OAU/AU project has failed to protect the everyday African person from human rights abuses from their leaders by refusing to intervene when they are happening in an effort to protect a state’s sovereignty.

African states are still dealing with the legacy of colonialism and the menace of neo-colonialism and global capitalism. There is an international hierarchical order that places African states at the bottom. The clearest example of this is the case of the “human rights intervention.” This is when a Western state (often a former colonial power) intervenes in an African states’ affair by sending troops or other forces under the guise of seeking to protect vulnerable populations from human rights abuses. Often these interventions bring about more instability than peace. This happens because human rights, although a progressive ideology, does not sufficiently address structural violence. This allows it to have little impact on the most vulnerable. I was partly inspired to do this research because my own country, Haïti, struggles against these same structures.

*“Under occupation, there is no justice.”*

*- Abed Tamimi*

# RESIST!

Knowing all this, in my research, I will explore the reasons why the OAU/AU has failed it's said project, what are they ways they can do better and how can human rights be transformed so that it is actually protecting people and not an ideological weapon of Western powers. I am particularly interested in grassroots movements in Africa that seek to transform society and indigenous ways of conflict resolution/transformation.

I have had many disagreements with people over the use of the term "violent" to describe conditions of poverty, and other systems of oppression. "Words mean things and we can't just toss around words like that," someone once said to me. Words DO mean things; trust me I completely understand. But when we expand our definition of violence to include things like the international order, we force ourselves to recognize its harm and seek ways to transform it.



*"In this world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself."*

- Frantz Fanon

# RESIST!



“[F]reedom’ is used [in America] as a synonym for ‘comfort.’ People think they are free because they don’t have a military machine oppressing them; but one of the simplest ways to lose freedom is to stop fighting for it and stop respecting it. And when it goes that way, something much worse happens, I think: when freedom goes that way, it completely vanishes, and nobody cares. [...] I still believe when a country has lost all human feeling, you can do anything to anybody and justify it, and we do know that in this country we have done just that.”

— James Baldwin, “What Price Freedom?” (1964)

*“What does it mean to be a citizen of a country on the wrong side of every liberation struggle on this earth?”*

*- Audre Lorde*

# RESIST!

## *The Emily Green Balch Class of 1950 Summer Stipend*

The Peace and Justice Studies Program offers an annual summer internship with a \$4000 stipend for students to carry out a project which analyzes the ways in which injustice is linked to conflict, or encourages the study of the relationship between peace, justice, and social change. Previous stipends have been awarded for internships at an environmental injustice organizations, a nonprofit program addressing childhood food insecurity in public schools, and many others.

**We are looking for interesting and diverse proposals, so do apply!**

Applications are due **Friday, March 1st, 2020 at 11:59pm**. They must be submitted electronically through the Wellesley Career Education website.

Visit <https://www.wellesley.edu/careereducation/resources/peace-justice-internship> for further details about the award, including application links.

Question? Contact Larry Rosenwald (lrosenwa@wellesley.edu), Nadya Hajj (nhajj@wellesley.edu), Catia Confortini (cconfort@wellesley.edu), or Wellesley Career Education (internships@wellesley.edu).

"We are not asked to subscribe to any utopia or to believe in a perfect world just around the corner. We are asked to be patient with necessarily slow and groping advice on the road forward, and to be ready for each step ahead as it becomes practicable. We are asked to equip ourselves with courage, hope, readiness for hard work, and to cherish large and generous ideals."

-Emily Green Balch

In 1946, Balch was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. For Miss Balch, it crowned 30 years of pioneering for peace. In May 1915, in the midst of World War I, a handful of American and European women, including Jane Addams and Emily Green Balch, then a Wellesley College Professor, made an unprecedented journey through Europe to urge a concrete plan for attaining an early peace. As a delegate to the International Congress of Women at the Hague in the same year, she played a prominent role in founding the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

- From *Improper Bostonian: Emily Green Balch* and [nobelprize.org](http://nobelprize.org)



*"With my music, I create change...I am using my music as a weapon."*

- Fela Kuti

# RESIST!



*Joy Harjo, the first  
Native American Poet Laureat*

## **I am a Dangerous Woman**

the sharp edges of clear blue windows  
motion to me  
from the airport's second floor  
edges dance in the foothills of the sandias  
behind security guards  
who wave me into their guncatcher machine

i am a dangerous woman

when the machine buzzes  
they say to take off my belt  
and i remove it so easy  
that it catches the glance  
of a man standing nearby  
(maybe that is the deadly weapon  
that has the machine singing)

i am a dangerous woman  
but the weapon is not visible  
security will never find it  
they can't hear the clicking  
of the gun  
inside my head

*by Joy Harjo*

*Injustice imprisons us all*



Standing in solidarity with all peoples across the globe fighting the ungovernable realities of neocolonialism, neoliberalism, corruption, police states, plutocracy, white supremacy, exploitation and plunder.

Stills from 35 Rhums. Claire Denis 2008.

