PROJECT SANCTUARY, Sonja Spoo ’13

Domestic violence affects 1 in 3 women in the United States in their lifetime. It is the largest cause of homelessness and violent death amongst women. For her Lang Project, Sonja Spoo ’13 created Project Sanctuary (PS) to increase awareness and understanding of domestic violence in faith communities through training, networks of communication, and help between secular domestic violence agencies and faith communities in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Project Sanctuary used a feminist approach to counseling and training sessions that focused on empowerment and survivor’s choice. PS also sought to create a safe space for women of faith to find help from their abusive circumstances both in the church and outside the church, and to dispel misconceptions about abuse, victims and abusers through four key avenues.

First, PS provided comprehensive training on domestic violence and abuse based on the “JARS Model” (an approach used by the Domestic Abuse Project, Sonja’s community partner, and other domestic violence agencies), but specifically modified it to address the needs of faith-leaders and communities. PS hosted two large-scale training sessions (four hours long with 20 – 30 participants), and four mini-trainings over the course of a year. By the conclusion of Sonja’s hands-on work with Project Sanctuary, over 100 faith leaders were trained. Additionally, PS’s training modules will be used at three other county level domestic violence agencies and several faith organizations in New York and Delaware. Second, PS created networks of communication and community within churches as a way to establish support and safe space for women suffering from abuse by working (continued on page 2)
**CLASS NOTES**

**Nick Allred ‘13** began a Master’s Program in English Literature 1700-1830 at Oxford University this fall.

**Sa’ed Atshan ‘06,** Postdoctoral Fellow at Brown University, will return to Swarthmore College on October 30 to deliver a talk, “Bethlehem Blues: Humanitarian Politics in the Palestinian Territories?” Here is a brief synopsis of his talk: “The population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) is among the highest recipients of international humanitarian aid per capita in the world. This lecture will analyze changes in the political economy of the OPT that have led to increased dependence on foreign assistance and the impact of that dependency on contemporary Palestinian society. With the West Bank governorate of Bethlehem as the base for this examination, we will trace the ‘social life of aid’ in the OPT and explore how international aid shapes the subjectivity, space and social fabric of Palestinians.”

**Ellen Donnelly ‘10** is a fourth-year, dual PhD candidate in Political Science and Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation explores the development and consequences of federal policies seeking to address the disproportionate engagement of minority groups with criminal justice structures. Ellen aims to distinguish the various institutional responses of the federal government, states, and local criminal justice systems to these reforms and better discern how government can successfully redress extant racial inequalities.

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**PROJECT SANCTUARY (cont’d)**

and coordinating with church leaders and women’s ministries to train individuals to be go-to individuals for women in abusive situations. PS also worked to establish support groups in church communities for those who have recently or are currently going through or getting out of abusive relationships. Domestic Abuse Project statistics for the spring of 2013 period have PS’s total outreach number at over 300 individuals and leaders in just three months.

Third, PS established concrete ties between church communities and domestic violence agencies in the Delaware County area by hosting speakers from agencies at churches to speak of the resources that are available to those suffering from abuse and by increasing agencies awareness of faith issues in regards to abuse. Finally, PS increased general awareness and education about domestic violence and abuse in the community via training sessions, speaking engagements, health fairs, and community discussions. By the end of her project experience, Sonja created a 100-page manual which will serve as a tool for future trainings and reference for PS workshop participants.

Noting the link between training sessions and networking, Sonja writes, “From the trainings, we began to receive several invitations to speak at churches. [For instance] I was invited to attend and present at the Chester Summit on Violence...PS was also invited to speak at the Springfield Ministerium. This sort of opportunity proved to be another unexpected entry-point for the project.” Sonja explains, “Ministeriums are collections of local pastors that meet monthly to go over issues in their local townships. In many ways, it was the interdenominational audience we had been looking to engage with. I worked to refine our large module down to a 30- to 45-minute presentation aimed at information- and resource-sharing.”

In the spring of 2013, PS expanded its outreach efforts to include law enforcement via police chaplains. Sonja also attended three ministeriums during this time and did several presentations in churches. She also presented as a number of community events. In May, PS hosted a panel discussion at Swarthmore College which was comprised of: Rev. Susan Victor from Womenspace, Mercer, New Jersey; Swarthmore alumna, survivor and advocate, Rabbi Donna Kirshbaum from String of Pearls; and author and survivor Lawanna Campbell. This event attracted over 80 faith-leaders from around Delaware County, Philadelphia, New Jersey, New York, and Delaware. The panel examined the ways in which faith communities have not been responsive to victims of domestic violence and the ways in which they can be uniquely responsive to victims.

Reflecting upon her LOS project experience, Sonja describes, “I feel that we really achieved our initial objective of hosting trainings and building robust networks of communication and support through the lay-leaders and invitations to speak at church events and ministeriums. These opportunities did not follow my original plan, but were the result of capitalizing on the people and resources that presented them. Indeed, the work of community and culture change is one that is reliant on being comfortable with tides. It can be hard to let go of original goals and ideas but the success of PS’s aims depended on how well I adapted to changes in the timeline, plans, and even the weather! I did not always know if things were going to work out, but felt sure that the brand of Project Sanctuary was growing and becoming a legitimate force in local faith-based communities. Even when pastors did not contact me for presentations or trainings, they did contact me for resources and materials. This was a profound shift from the ambivalence I first experienced when beginning the recruitment for our first training workshop.”
LANG PROJECT UPDATES

A primary intention of the LOS Program is to empower Swarthmore students to create and implement original, innovative solutions to pressing social problems in a sustainable fashion. From 1981 to 2013, the LOS program has supported 184 Lang Scholars doing social action projects in over 30 countries. Here read about three Lang projects that continue to bear impact upon the communities they serve.

Chenge Mahomva ’10 writes, “My journey to the US started in 2006-2007 because of the political and economic unrest in Zimbabwe. Traveling to America was really my only chance to fulfill my dream to be a physician and make a positive contribution to my home country. In hindsight, I could not have landed at a better place than Swarthmore where I could undertake rigorous scientific research while simultaneously starting the Early Childhood Development Center in Zimbabwe (her Lang Project)... My Lang Project is still going strong. UNICEF and the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe continue to provide the majority of funding.” According to AAMC only 183 foreign students from around the world matriculated into medical school in 2012. And Chenge was among them! This fall, Chenge started medical school at Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College.

Though Sarah Scheub ’12 has graduated, her Lang Project – Centro De Experimentacion Sostenible Onon Jonibo (Sustainable Experimentation Center of the People of the Ants) – is still going strong. In fact, some of the permaculture techniques and sustainable agriculture practices used in her project have been replicated by others. For example, Sarah writes, “Chaikuni Permaculture Institute partnered with Alianza Arkana, a non-profit which now houses my project, to advance the Onan Jonibo model. The project, called Bena Nii (“New Forest” in Shipibo) started eight months ago with nine participating families. Now, having seen the benefits of using permaculture there are 14 families involved. They are all implementing home-gardens through the use of mungas (shared communal labor) which was a staple of the Onan Jonibo model. The nursery created by my Lang Project in Nuevo Egipto has now been expanded and has connected with two nurseries in neighboring communities that were constructed through the Bena Nii project. Together they are starting a seed-sharing network that, so far, has been very successful in redistributing surplus seedlings and materials. Chaikuni plans to build three to six more nurseries and expand the seed-sharing network in the coming year. To complement the tangible changes in the community, the partnership led permaculture training for Shipibo youth in August. Ten of those youth are supported by the organizations in three communities to continue the Bena Nii and Onan Jonibo models and use eco-social entrepreneurship to create economic opportunities that are socially and ecologically regenerative in their own communities.”

The mission of SkillQuest, the Lang Project of Akunna Uka ’14, is to support existing efforts to provide adult education in Chester, PA and expand the delivery of adult education in technology. As a result of the mission, SkillQuest involves working directly with students through classes and providing resources to the partner organization, the Delaware County Literacy Council. Akunna writes, “This summer, I led a pilot basic computer class and I had a wonderful teaching assistant, Diane Drott, who had years of teaching experience. I was so excited to learn recently that Diane is leading the class this semester!” In May 2013, Akunna won a Truman Scholarship, which recognizes strong leadership potential, intellectual ability and a commitment to careers in government or the nonprofit sector. Only 62 students from around the country receive the scholarship, which provides $30,000 for graduate study.

CLASS NOTES (cont’d)

Ecem Erseker ’12 (pictured here) recently earned a Master's in Accounting and Finance at the London School of Economics (LSE).

Priya Johnson ’11 is working in Philadelphia with Youth United for Change as a youth organizer. Priya writes, “My first day of work I was sitting in the street blocking traffic with thousands of people. We’ve had some wins, but still the district has closed 24 schools and made major cuts. I’ve been here for a little over a year now and continue to be challenged every day. I organize two chapters of young people, one based at Edison High School and the other with students who have been ‘pushed out’ and are either out of school or in alternative and accelerated programs. We meet with youth once a week and help them design and move forward issue based campaigns to address their concerns about the education system. I get to see first-hand every day how incredible and powerful young people are. The work is inspiring, but also very frustrating and exhausting. I am endlessly grateful that I come into this work with the experience and perspective that the Lang Scholarship afforded me—not only in terms of how I am able to approach youth organizing, but also how I am able to remember to take care of myself in order to make my best possible contribution to the larger movement.”
IN THE NEWS

Salem Shuchman ’84 and Barbara Klock ’86 recently donated $1.5 million towards a new multi-use facility, “The Matchbox,” which will be used for athletics, theater rehearsals, and wellness programming.

Duong Tran ’15 was nominated by the director general of the Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO to be Vietnam’s sole national delegate at the 8th UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris in late October. Joining around 500 young delegates from all over the world, Tran will discuss issues related to young people’s civic engagement, including ways to improve their skills and enable them to apply their creativity and entrepreneurialism successfully. “It is a great honor to represent Vietnam and also Swarthmore College and the LOS Program... I intend to talk about the tremendous potential Vietnamese youth have to contribute to Vietnam’s sustainable development and the importance of building their thinking, debating, and public-speaking skills as well as their knowledge of social issues,” he says.

WITH GRATITUDE

Heartfelt thanks to Eugene M. Lang ’38 for his continued support and generosity to the LOS Program!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WANTED: PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS & MENTORS

For many Lang Scholars, mentoring is key to a positive LOS experience and often has beneficial impact on the outcome of the Lang Project. Among the interview participants of the LOS Retrospective (1999-2010), the few Lang Scholars who did not seek out mentors “felt they suffered because of it, either because they felt isolated or they struggled to figure out things (identifying resources, making community connections) that could have been done more easily with the right kind of support.”

After being admitted to the LOS Program, Lang Scholars are called upon to assemble a Project Advisory Committee. This committee is comprised of people with some level of expertise in the subject area of the project proposal and/or familiarity with best practices in project design and implementation. The job of the committee is to provide advice, insight, or other feedback to the Scholar about her/his/their project proposal, and eventually, to help decide whether the project is fundable as-is or not. If you are interested in being a mentor to a current Lang Scholar or serving as a Project Advisory Committee member, you are encouraged to e-mail the Lang Scholar Advisor at jmagee1@swarthmore.edu with your subject area (or areas) of expertise and/or project experience, as well as your preferred email address and phone number. As new Lang Scholars enter the program and seek out mentors or committee members, we will make this information available to them.

THE LANG CENTER WEBSITE, REDESIGNED

As the College has shifted to a new web design, so too has the Lang Center web site... including the Lang Opportunity Scholarship Program web pages. Here <http://www.swarthmore.edu/lang-center-for-civic-and-social-responsibility/multi-year-grants/los-opportunity-scholarship-program.xml> you will find information about current Lang Scholars, the LOS Program, and see the Dogfish Stories archive.

HAPPY 150TH ANNIVERSARY, SWARTHMORE COLLEGE!

In honor of Swarthmore College’s 150th anniversary, the LOS Program would like to plan an event inspired by and designed for Lang Scholar alumni. We’re still in the brainstorming phase so your suggestions and ideas are most welcome!

SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

If you have a “class note,” “dogfish story,” picture, or other information you’d like to share with fellow Lang Scholars, please email jmagee1@swarthmore.edu. Dogfish Stories is e-published during spring break (mid-March) and fall break (mid-October) each year.