

# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

SPECIAL EDITION 2015

Dickinson

## 20th Anniversary Mosaic Reunion



Joyce Bylander speaking with Mosaic alumni  
Photo by Carl Sander Socolow '77



Stafford Auditorium, Rector, Dickinson College,  
Photo by Carl Sander Socolow '77

“The Mosaic changed my life” was an oft repeated phrase at the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the American and Global Mosaics program held on September 26<sup>th</sup> during Homecoming and Family Weekend. Some 100 people gathered to hear alumni speak of how their Mosaic experiences influenced their life and work at Dickinson and beyond. The dynamic panel moved people to tears and laughter as alumni spoke to faculty, current students, their families, and fellow alums. From Steelton, Pennsylvania to Patagonia, Argentina; from Adams County to Michoacán, Mexico; from South Africa to Peru, alumni recalled how the intensive, interdisciplinary, and collaborative research projects taught them so much about the communities and people with whom they were working, and also about themselves. “The skills I learned through the Mosaic are ones that I carry with me wherever I go,” commented Danielle Goonan. “And the relationships I developed in Adams County and in Patagonia are ones I cherish to this day,” remarked Rosemary McGunnigle-Gonzales; “the Mosaics had a huge impact on me and the work I do today.”

After the panel discussion, current students from some of the most recent mosaics shared their experiences (Inequality in Brazil, the Mediterranean Migration Mosaic in Morocco, France, and Spain, and the Race and Education Mosaic in South Africa). We want to personally thank each and every one of you who came to the reunion—you helped create such a memorable evening!

The mosaics are what they are because of all of you who have participated! So thank you: all of the alumni, faculty, and supporters of the mosaics! And we look forward to engaging more students in future Mosaics, so stay tuned!

See Tony Moore's article highlighting the event at [http://www.dickinson.edu/news/article/1796/mosaic\\_memories](http://www.dickinson.edu/news/article/1796/mosaic_memories), and our website at [http://www.dickinson.edu/homepage/825/reflections\\_on\\_the\\_mosaics](http://www.dickinson.edu/homepage/825/reflections_on_the_mosaics).

## Mosaic Participants Reflect on their Experiences



**American Mosaic Inaugural Class—Steelton, PA**  
 by Becci Menghini, Class of 1996

I came to Dickinson a small-town kid from the heart of the midwest. Pennsylvania was a long ways from my Wisconsin home, and I remember being overwhelmed by what seemed to be East Coast fanciness when I first arrived on campus. I felt a bit out of my league at first, but quickly found so much to love inside those limestone walls that I forgot my insecurities about wealth and class. I was a curious soul, if not a bit naive, and completely immersed myself in the opportunities the College provided. I remember with great fondness my freshman seminar and the friends I met in that first class all about Texas, the Wednesday afternoon common hour events that brought together people from across the campus, and a year abroad that afforded me the chance to study in England and travel across Europe. I remember giving tours

to prospective students, donning a Blue Hat for the first time, and riding ambulance as a volunteer with the local fire department. And I remember the first time I walked into the Steel Mill as part of the inaugural class of the American Mosaic Project.

We'd spent the previous weeks learning about oral history and Sociology from Professor Rose and memoir from Professor Sharon O'Brien. We'd been challenged to ask different and better questions, to let the voices of others tell the real story, and to find the balance between being recorders and translators of experience and history. But it was not until we walked inside the gates of the steel mill in Steelton, PA, that those lessons, and the one ones about class that Professor Barone had tried to explain using macroeconomic theory - became real. It was not until we listened to second and third-generation steel workers tell us about losing everything they'd known that I understood just how interconnected the world is, and how economic decisions on the other side of the globe left one family without its patriarch, and another scrambling to figure out how they'd pay the rent and put food on the table. My team spent weeks with the steelworkers union, learning about their early efforts to keep the mill alive, and their subsequent efforts to ensure management provided re-training opportunities for the workers who'd spent their days and nights reshaping steel. I was struck by the optimism of both those in the union and those whose lives were so dramatically changing, and I was overwhelmed by the willingness of this community to invite us into their homes, their workplace, and their lives.

In truth, my team struggled some to digest all we'd learned in that semester. Our final report was long-winded, and our professors noted that we'd not entirely hit the mark in framing all that we'd encountered and digested. I remember being a little frustrated about the fact that my grade didn't seem to reflect all that I thought I'd learned, and I was disappointed to not have aced the course that challenged me as much as that American Mosaic semester did.

I have since come to understand, however, that the lessons of that semester extended well beyond any grade or paper. What I wasn't able to articulate then were the ways that my world had been opened up by people whose lives were so different than mine. I couldn't explain the impact of hearing my steelworker friends talk--not with envy or jealousy, but instead with pride--about my privilege of attending a school like Dickinson. They, together with the Dickinson faculty, helped me to understand the intersection of economic theory



From left to right: Photograph of Christine Murphy Costello, Erica Monheit, and Becci Menghini Steelton Mosaic, 1996.

# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

and life, all the ways luck and chance and good fortune had brought me from that small town in Wisconsin to the receiving end of their teaching, and just how many more such opportunities lay ahead. Indeed, when I was doing my dissertation research several years later, I could hear Professor Rose pushing me to ask different questions, to listen, and to get my interviewees to open up and tell the story for me. I could hear Professor Barone admonishing me to recognize the voices that were missing, and Professor O'Brien's call to write history not just by describing what happened, but by letting the voices of those who lived it shine through the narrative. I found myself then, and now in my work, asking how I might connect the seemingly unrelated, open the dialogue to include more and different people, and create an analysis that more accurately captures what I've learned. The lessons of that semester continue; I wonder if a grade change is in order.



Steelton Mosaic 20 Years Later +1,  
Photo by Carl Sander Socolow '77

*Becci Menghini, Ed.D. serves as a Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Workforce Strategy, Equity and Engagement at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. In this role, she has a dual focus; she provides the direct oversight of and has day-to-day responsibility for the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office and she also provides top-level, strategic leadership and management of division-wide projects and pan-University efforts. The Workforce Strategy, Equity and Engagement division is responsible for the University's Human Resources, Diversity, Title IX and Equal Opportunity and Compliance functions.*

*Prior to assuming the role at UNC in August of 2015, Becci served as Chief of Staff in the Office of the Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison—a post she held for just over six years. In that role, she was responsible for strategic problem solving, management of communications among campus leadership, and larger-scale project management for central campus units.*

*Becci holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an Ed.D. in Higher Education Management from the University of Pennsylvania. She wrote her dissertation on how institutional presidents manage crises and brings expertise to questions of emergency response on college and university campuses and reputation management in crisis.*



**Jamie A. Metzinger Shover, Class of 1998, Steelton Mosaic**  
Excerpt from the reunion:

If there's one thing I learned during my time at Dickinson [during the mosaic] it was that I can talk to anyone about just about anything and connect with them pretty quickly. I think that's really the best lesson I've taken away ~ to be able to really see a community of people and appreciate who they are and what they have to offer ~ to just be able to listen and hear what people have to say and combine it with some self reflection. I think that's a really important part... That reflective time when you're studying other cultures, and to think about how that impacts you and your perspectives. It's essential really in learning about things that are different from your own perspective... I had this working class cross to bear... but came to realize how rich that working-class culture is ~ how it made me who I was—but I didn't know then how to allow myself to

be me and to be at Dickinson, this school where I really felt like a fish out of water. The Mosaic semester, however, taught me to really look at myself and appreciate who I was and where I came from... [It taught me] how to think critically and to fine tune my writing ~ and just the analytic mind that you develop that enables you to really go into any situation and

# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

really think deeply about the context and everything you're going through. I found that to be an unexpected lesson... and I use this skill everyday. The Mosaic really did change my life.

*Jamie Metzinger Shover is a Business Intelligence Analyst for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.*



**Rosemary McGunnigle-Gonzales, Class of 2001, Mexican Migration and Patagonia Mosaics**

*REFLECTIONS ON METHOD, EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND A WAY OF LIFE on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American and Global Mosaics*

### **Marginality and Choice**

I think often of two exchanges I had as a Mosaic participant.

The first is with Sr. Allende in January of 2001 at the Biblioteca Popular – a lending library he'd created in the ground floor of his own home in a marginal, largely Chilean immigrant neighborhood in Comodoro Rivadavia, Argentina. We were doing interviews as part of the First International Mosaic in Patagonia, Argentina. Sr. Allende said to me, "No tenemos agua, no tenemos luz, no tenemos gas" as he began the story of how his barrio was developed.

The other exchange is with crew leader Carlos Fernandez in the Fall of 1998, whom we were interviewing as part of the American Mosaic in Adams County, PA. We sat in his home in the labor camp. Following an emotional interview in which he told of the treatment his children experienced as migrant children, he insisted we not pity him. "I chose this life" he said, as he asked us to really take in and appreciate the view of the fields and the orchards outside his door. Both men were telling a story about people and place relationships. They were both telling us that while we or others might see their marginality, they chose this life, they chose this place and they built something.

### **Mosaic Alum, and Dickinson Proud**

I chose Dickinson for its reputation in language education and study abroad. For the girl who'd never left the country and who learned to speak Spanish at a Long Island bakery, I was thrilled to put those four patches on the arm of my gown at graduation: one for each of the countries I'd studied in as a college student – Spain, the Dominican Republic, Austria and Argentina.

And yet more than becoming trilingual or studying abroad, the American and Global Mosaics defined my Dickinson experience. They are the #1 thing that makes me "Dickinson-proud." The Mosaics are what makes my undergraduate education truly unique.

### **Educational Vision and Commitments**

Perhaps the most immediate and visible effect of the Mosaics on my education is my self-developed major in Latin American & Latino Studies. Another is the year I spent as a Fulbright scholar researching German youth and national identity in Leipzig, Germany. But the effects go beyond academic pursuits. The Mosaics shaped my educational philosophy and my vision of what education could look like, that is: immersive, collaborative, teambuilding, experiential and practical, and exciting! The Mosaics show how such a program can emerge out of, grow within and generate questions on the line separating the academy and the world as well as in the spaces shared by the academic disciplines.

Without a doubt, the Mosaics had a great impact on my choice to pursue a PhD in Sociology. My Mosaic experiences and training even influenced my approach to my dissertation – namely, my decisions to combine service and ethnography, to combine oral history and archival research, to invest in good audio equipment and to learn to use it, to find archives that would be good homes for the audio recorded interviews, to take extra steps in getting



# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

this approved by the Internal Review Board, and to put the commitment to recording a full biography at the start of each oral history interview. I even refer to the same foundational texts I was first introduced to as a Mosaic participant – Valerie Raleigh Yow’s *Recording Oral History: A Guide to for the Humanities and Social Sciences* and Alessandro Portelli’s *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. I bring the Mosaic experience with me into every classroom I step into whether I’m on the student or the teaching side.



## A Way of Life

I recently read somewhere that photography is an art, a science, and a way of life. Dickinson College’s Mosaics gave me my identity as a documentarian of the world around me. It is my “way of life” whether I’m “on the job” as a sociologist, taking a walk through a neighborhood for the first or fiftieth time, talking to a neighbor at the park, at a family dinner or looking through family albums or documents. Through the Mosaics I’ve gained priceless, lasting relationships with members of my research teams, Dickinson faculty and administrators and my host family in Argentina. Somehow, neither time nor distance dull the powerfulness of these connections.

In Comodoro Rivadavia, I interviewed by host dad, a proud man about my father’s age, a man who I’d come to esteem and love as my “Papa Francisco”. In talking about the suffering of his native Paraguay, he began to cry. I think I was afraid, and I wanted to give him an “out,” so I told him we didn’t have to talk about that if he didn’t want to. Watching the video on-site at the Bulgarian Association in Comodoro, Marcelo Borges’s feedback was “just wait.” “Let the person finish; let them work through it. Just wait and listen.” In fact, my host dad had said, “no, no, no” when I offered him that out. He wanted to speak. Borges’s advice means even more to me today than it did then when I was in my early 20s. We often see waiting, holding back as evidence of hesitation, as a sign of fear. And yet, it also takes courage to wait and to listen. And that advice has made me not only a better interviewer and a better scholar, but also a better friend and neighbor, a better daughter, spouse and parent, and quite simply a better human being than I was before I learned that.

*Rosemary McGunnigle-Gonzales is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology at Columbia University. Her core research interests are in the fields of migration, place, narrative and silence. Her dissertation focuses on the historical sociology of silence in a suburban Long Island, NY town. As a Fulbright research fellow in Leipzig, she conducted research on German youth, national identity and xenophobia. These early projects incorporated ethnography, oral history, photo-elicitation, and digital video. Rosemary earned a professional certificate in digital filmmaking from the NYU School of Continuing & Professional Studies in 2005, and founded The Visual Voices Project, LLC in 2006 as a vehicle to pursue documentary projects. Before pursuing graduate studies, McGunnigle-Gonzales worked as a legal assistant she interviewed and prepared affidavits and statements of collected and translated documents from African and Latin American political asylum applicants, domestic violence victims eligible for permanent residence under VAWA (the Violence Against Women Act), and applicants for permanent residence under NACARA (the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Refugee Act).*

## Natalie Vinski, Class of 2000, Mexican Migration Mosaic

I participated in the 1st Mexican Migration Mosaic in 1998, and even though it has been 15+ years, my Mosaic memories are still clear: a beautiful autumn spent exploring the winding back lanes of Adams County, learning about life, language, and music from Mexican-born farm workers, getting my feet wet as a first time ESL instructor, and discovering that the best tacos in the world are the ones served from a pick up truck on the side of the road. My favorite memory: when my classmates and I invited a couple of our young adult ESL



# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

students to Dickinson to experience American Halloween customs-- we helped them put together costumes, taught them about trick-or-treating, and brought them to parties.

Though it was a U.S. based program, the Mosaic triggered in me a now long-standing personal, professional, and academic interest in international education and cross-cultural research. I studied abroad in the Czech Republic during the semester after my Mosaic semester, focusing on art and social change in the post-revolution era. Senior year and back at Dickinson, I felt the call to return to Adams County. I developed an independent study, facilitating a community mural project, "Civil Wall," involving Latino youth from an after school program in Gettysburg. Soon after graduation, I started a career in international education and study abroad administration at the college level and completed a MA degree in intercultural relations where the ethnographic research skills I gained in the Mosaic really put me at an advantage. In 2011 I was awarded a Fulbright to teach English and American culture at a university in Morocco where I utilized the ESL skills I had learned in my Mosaic internship. Today, I'm back in the U.S. enrolled in a PhD program in international education policy and working for a university program that connects college students to globally-focused experiential programs like the Mosaic. My Mosaic experience helped me develop the skills and qualities I need to succeed as an internationally-minded educator in our globalized world.

*Natalie Vinski is now a Program Manager with Global Communities College of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Maryland. She graduated from Dickinson College in 2000 with a degree in American Studies.*



**Danielle Goonan, Class of 2007, Patagonia Mosaic**

Excerpt from the reunion:

Dickinson will always be my home... [when looking for colleges] I came across Dickinson and I thought "Oh this looks good, I wanna be a lawyer, a lot of people from Dickinson go to law school." Well, I'm not a lawyer. But I got to the part where 60 plus percent of Dickinsonians study abroad. I was like that's it, book closed, I'm going to Dickinson because I had never been abroad before. I'm a blue collar girl from Brooklyn, nobody goes abroad. So I said that is where I wanna go... I got a call that told me congratulations you are a POSSE scholar for Dickinson College, so that was it. December 19<sup>th</sup>, I went home and I took all the other college applications that I was filling out and they went in... the recycling... [When looking at information on the Patagonia Mosaic] I was like "Oh my God they're going to Argentina," and I was fascinated because as an Italian girl from Brooklyn... I was obsessed with Italian migration to the United States, and so I did a lot of research in high school and

even in my American Studies classes... I was spending a lot of time studying Italian migration to the United States and what that experience was like for Italian Americans, so I thought Argentina. Lots of Italians went there. Now I could compare the Italian American experience with the Italian Argentinian experience... Academically it was to be able to really dive deep into Italian migration which was fabulous because when I came back to Dickinson as a sophomore, I was able to work with Professor Rose and Professor Borges to really develop what that paper was going to look like which became really helpful because the following year I went to Bologna for the entire year. And I learned Italian... I'm fluent in Italian now. I had two host families, I had an internship, I mean I for the first time in my life, [I] really was able to integrate myself into a different community and feel like I belonged. And that was because I was able to not only do what I did during the mosaic program, but to learn, to make some mistakes, to practice what it's like to speak another language, so when I got to Italy I was like okay, this isn't a trial run... this is the real deal... Now I work for the President, I'm part of the Obama Administration. I'm an appointee in the Department of Education... We were at our political retreat yesterday and... they asked us to go around the table and say why we were public servants and why we were in education. So I was able to get through the public servant side, but when they asked me why are you in education, I broke down... I started

# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

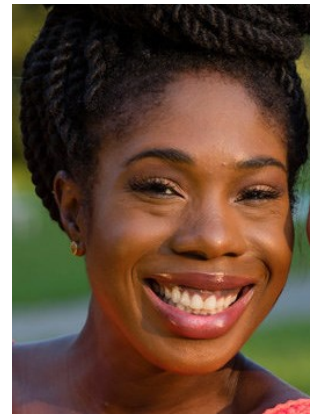
crying... I said it's because my teachers have saved my life. And there are so many people that I know back at home who did not have the experiences that I had with my teachers. Whether it was K-12 or at Dickinson, I say all the time my teachers were my best friends. They were my mentors. If I had to be interviewed and they had to say who has had the greatest impact on your life, I would say my teachers have had the greatest impact on my life... Whether it was my Fulbright experience, whether it was deciding to go and get a master's degree in international relations from the London School of Economics, whether it's my obsession with immigration, whether it's my obsession with transatlantic issues, whether it's my love for Latin America and all things Latin American, I would say it all started with the mosaic program, so thank you.

*Danielle Goonan was appointed to the Obama Administration in February, 2015 to lead strategic partnerships for the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. In this role, she works with stakeholders in the corporate, labor and philanthropic sectors on behalf of the US Department of Education. Most recently, Danielle led the Clinton Global Initiative's domestic education and skills development team with responsibilities that included managing the CGI U.S. Youth Employment Action Network in partnership with the Office of Secretary Clinton's JobOne program, overseeing the strategy of CGI America's education and skills Working Groups, and leading the growth of the workforce development portfolio of Commitments to Action. Prior to this position, Danielle worked at the Council on Foreign Relations in Member and Corporate Relations. She received her MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics and her undergraduate degree in American Studies summa cum laude from Dickinson College where she was a Posse Foundation Scholar and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Danielle is a Humanity in Action Senior Fellow and currently sits on the HiA U.S. Planning Board, and was a Fulbright Scholar to Italy. She is an Advisory Board Member to the Grace Institute and was a Board of Director of the Public Health Association of NYC. She was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York.*

## **Lauren Smith, Class of 2006, Mexican Migration Mosaic**

Excerpt from the reunion:

Someone suggested to me maybe you should try the mosaic program... and... It really did change my life... We worked closely with the migrant workers in Adams County, Pennsylvania and these are the people that were picking fruit and packaging fruit... [Be]cause I did the Mosaic the first semester of my sophomore year, I refer to it as college boot camp because... you go into a program where you are reading the research literature and ethnographies, and then conducting your own research, sitting in people's homes, and going into the fields. The first time I put on the bag that they put the apples in and felt the weight of it... I felt the weight of the job, and that's not something you would ever get just by reading essays or scholarly journals... The reason I refer to it as college boot camp, is because when you have the entirety of your coursework and you have maybe two or three professors and you see them everyday. You are living with them, you are traveling with them it's hard to do mediocre work when you know that this person who I'm staying in a hotel with is gonna look at me and say I know you can do better. It's hard to be like, well, that professor is just a professor when you're really living and doing the work together. That person almost becomes a colleague and a mentor... I was a good student when I came to Dickinson. Both my parents work in higher education. My dad's a professor and my mom's an assistant provost. They taught me how to be a good student, how to do well in school, but after the mosaic I never ever got anything below an A- ever in any class because after I got out of that program I knew how to write, I knew how to interview, I knew how to interpret interviews, I knew how to get the work done at a level that I had not ever achieved before... The program really changed me as a student. And after I returned from doing Crossing Borders, I went back to Adams County because I felt such an affinity for the community... It really did shape my Dickinson experience... I write jokes for TV, so I'm not changing



# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

the world in anyway, but I will say my experience in the mosaic really honestly literally prepared me for that job. When I went to New York and started working as a Production Assistant for VH1, I was the fastest transcriber in the building because I had spent a whole semester doing it, and the interviews were in English so that was even easier. I'm sitting there like I can not believe that all that work I did in Mexico is making me a superstar TV Production Assistant... I learned how to interview people, I still do that... I transcribe the interviews, I find what's interesting about the interviews, what's funny about them, and turn them into a story, and that's all stuff that I did in the Mexican Migration Mosaic program.

*After Dickinson, Lauren Smith moved to New York where she works in television and performs improv comedy at the Magnet Theater with Story Pirates (an arts education organization). She started out in production and now works full time as a TV comedy writer. Her credits include "Fashion Queens" on Bravo, VH1's "Best Week Ever," and numerous series and specials on Bravo, Lifetime, VH1 and more.*



**Ryan Koons, Class of 2010, Black Liberation Movements Mosaic**

When my adviser, Prof. Amy Wlodarski of the Music Department, informed me about the Black Liberation Movements Mosaic in spring 2008, I jumped at it. I had never traveled outside North America, never flown on a plane, never before been surrounded by a culture not my own. Our comparative study of the South African anti-apartheid movement and the civil rights movement as it existed in Mississippi taught me much about those two different liberation movements, cultures, and to my surprise, a great deal about myself.

While preparing this essay, I realized I could tell a number of different stories from my Mosaic experience. I could give a professional narrative, in which the field methods I honed and the field experiences I had helped me matriculate into the oldest and largest graduate program in the world in my discipline, ethnomusicology. I could give an intellectual narrative, wherein I and my colleagues came intimately to understand the constructed nature of race and racism when we found ourselves assigned to South African racial categories we had never before encountered. I could tell a musicological narrative, of conducting fieldwork on the music of the anti-apartheid movement, using it to construct an audio essay with a Mosaic colleague, and of the elation we felt when a peer-reviewed academic journal published it. I could tell an economic narrative, of facing our comparative privilege when encountering contemporary financial poverty in parts of South Africa and Mississippi. I could tell a political narrative, of spending presidential election night 2008 in a small African American town in Mississippi and hearing an exquisitely joyful cacophony of car horns, gunshots, and shouts heralding Barack Obama's election. Instead, I have decided to tell a very personal story, one I was surprised to discover I could tell.

Alongside my advisor Prof. Wlodarski and Prof. Jeremy Ball, the late Prof. Kim Rogers completed the triumvirate of faculty who directed our Mosaic. Together, they mentored us, taught us, challenged us, disciplined us, and sometimes offered us shoulders on which to cry. They introduced us to ethnographic field methods, the intertwined histories of South African and African American communities working to overcome racial oppressions, and the music those communities made to accompany and fortify their efforts. We learned how to ask interview questions of our narrators that resulted in answers our narrators were unaware they knew. We learned the trick of gutting a book or article—college students take note—wherein you read the introduction and the conclusion, and skim the rest as needed. Learning this trick has helped me survive graduate school.

We were all saddened when Kim Rogers died in early 2014. She was a much-loved person and much-admired scholar in the discipline of oral history and in OHA, the Oral History Association. OHA honored Kim with a memorial panel during their 2014 national meeting and asked me to write a short piece from my experiences as her student. I was thrilled



# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

and immediately began combing through my Mosaic field notes and the photos we took during our research. I was very surprised with what I encountered in my field notes. Except when searching for brief details and references, I had not gone through the journals I kept during the Mosaic. Now, five years later, I read through them, some for the first time.

I came out of the closet during my freshman fall at Dickinson. Those of you who identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual/transgender) or have friends or family who identify as such know that the process of coming out is not a one-time event. In different ways we come out of the closet on a daily basis—thankfully, it becomes easier the more we do it. Reading my South Africa and Mississippi field notes, I rediscovered a self poised halfway out the closet door.



Kim Rogers during the Black Liberation Movements Mosaic

Being a gay visitor and field researcher in South Africa and Mississippi forced me to learn about myself and to come to terms with my sexual orientation. The two places led me to different realizations. South Africa had legalized same-sex marriage in 1994 when the apartheid government fell. Having had its fill of legally enforced racial bias, those in the new government attempted to craft a new constitution free of prejudice, and legalizing homosexuality and same sex marriage were two results. Learning this before our arrival, I naively assumed that social attitudes would reflect the legal situation. While there might be some truth to my assumption in certain parts of the country, I was not yet in full possession of the facts. A number of South Africans, perhaps especially some of the tribes, felt that the new government had overstepped its authority in 1994 when it legalized same sex marriage. I learned this first hand when I perhaps rashly came out to one of our host mothers. Although she made something of an exception for me as a guest, she bluntly told me she was against homosexuality and did not understand it. Reading back over my journals, I saw that I spent much of the rest of that research trip debating how far outside of the closet I could or should be.

The situation in Mississippi was different. Same sex marriage was still illegal in the US, although social attitudes increasingly accepted LGBT people. I remember exploring the Mississippi town in which I was staying with a colleague. Although he identified as heterosexual, he and I often joked that he had a "metrosexual" or gay fashion sense. Certainly one of the women we met during our ramble that day thought we were a couple. To my shock, she was not hostile, and actually came out to us herself! Despite her reaction, my South African experiences prompted me to stay firmly in the closet while conducting the Mississippi leg of the Mosaic.

Reading through my field notes again, I uncovered a number of "angsty" or "emo" entries. As I think we all discover, growing up can be rather... difficult! Certainly, I cringed while reading portions of those journals while working on Kim's eulogy. At the same time, I discovered what appeared to have been a key time in my self-acceptance as a gay man. Just as people in different places construct race and racial categories differently, so too do they differently construct their attitudes around sex and sexuality. Learning that different cultures regard sexuality in sometimes vastly differing ways, allowed me to ignore societal expectations. I no longer felt forced to conform to some outside idea of what a gay man *ought* to be.

Browsing through the District Six Museum in Cape Town during our first week in the field, I remember encountering pictures of moffies, nineteenth and early twentieth-century instantiations of what we in the US might now call drag

# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER



queens or trans women. They existed somewhere in between the two. Researching them later, I came to appreciate the broad distinctions between moffies and other South African queer identities and the queer identities I encountered here in the US. If they could be so different from one another, I thought, I saw no reason why I could not be different from both of them. To be gay without having to fulfill a stereotype was a liberating realization and the pertinent entry in my journal reflects something of the relief I experienced the first time I came out of the closet.

When I talk about my Mosaic experience now, I find myself describing it as a watershed moment, a time of great personal and professional growth. I entered the program knowing that I would learn about field methods and the histories and musics of different cultures. I do not know that I expected

to learn about myself and my home culture, but I did. I have never experienced such a sense of culture shock as I did the day after we returned to the US from South Africa. Seeing my home culture and myself again for the first time forced me to think about the differences between them. I and *not* my home culture had clearly changed. It took me much of the rest of the year to begin to understand precisely how I had changed. Embedding yourself into another culture, even if only for a short period, allows you to discover more about yourself than you thought possible and sometimes, the lessons you learn there help you grow up.

Looking back now, I have come to perceive the intersections and connections between the anti-apartheid and civil rights movements and the LGBT struggle for civil rights. The desire for equal treatment under law, of access to human rights denied because of phenotype, sexual orientation, or gender expression merges these and other civil rights movements. Despite the many distinctions, our struggles for civil rights exhibit a remarkable similarity. Although we focused on black liberation movements, we came to better understand humanity as a whole.

*Ryan Koons '10, an ethnomusicologist and documentary filmmaker, is currently completing his PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has conducted field research in the American indigenous Southeast, the Scandinavian diaspora, South Africa, Mississippi, and early music and American folk music communities. Koons' research interests are varied and include Native American traditions, contemporary baroque performance practice, historical and medical ethnomusicology, community, archival studies, and dance. Koons is also a professional musician, specializing in early music and traditional musics from Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, and the British Isles.*

**Christine Burns, Class of 2014, Global Climate Change Mosaic COP17**

**Excerpt from: What's Your Issue?**

In February of 2011, I took the first step of a journey that would change my perspective on life of what I knew to be true. I filled out the application to be part of the Dickinson College Global Climate Change Africa Mosaic ("the Mosaic"). The Mosaic was a unique semester in which a group of 11 students took four classes in the fall of 2011 to prepare for a trip to the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Durban, South Africa...

Through the Mosaic, I have learned to connect climate change to many of the issues that I care about and see how inter-



# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

connected many of the world's biggest issues are.

In fact, if I have learned anything this semester, it is that I have only just breached the surface of understanding climate change, and I could study it for the rest of my life and still not know everything. I have learned that there is no way we will solve climate change tomorrow, but if we do not start working today, then there is no way we can sustain life on this planet as we have come to know it. This semester has made me realize that I want to dedicate the rest of my life to further study of climate change.



## Timothy Damon, Class of 2012, Global Climate Change Mosaic COP17

My experience with the Global Climate Change Africa Mosaic led me directly to where I am today. The Mosaic introduced me to the complex environment of the UN Climate Negotiations, while also bringing me face-to-face with the extreme poverty in South Africa, where the UN conference was hosted that year. It really gave a human face to everything I'd been studying and working on from an academic perspective during my time at Dickinson. Consequently, I decided to study my masters in Climate Change and International Development, in order to better understand

these two interconnected challenges. My thesis work then took me back to the climate talks in June of 2013, ultimately leading me to join *SustainUS*, a youth-led NGO which annually sends U.S. youth as delegates to the climate talks.

*Timothy Damon '12 is currently working as the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator for the SustainUS delegation that will be going to the huge meeting of the climate negotiations this December in Paris, where countries must finalize their new climate treaty. This position evolved out of his work as a SustainUS delegate for the two previous annual conferences in Warsaw and Lima. He also worked within the official youth constituency to the climate negotiations with young people from around the world, focusing on climate policy and advocacy. These efforts have actually gotten youth-proposed language into the draft of this treaty.*

## Maeve Hogel, Class of 2015, Global Climate Change Mosaic COP20

Just before graduating in May, I accepted a job teaching English at a B-Corporation called Beyond English, and less than a month later I moved to Santiago, Chile. As required of all B-Corporations, Beyond English is a for-profit organization with a social mission; we teach private English classes in large corporations, such as Groupon and the Chilean National Bank, in order to fund our English classes and projects in some of Santiago's most vulnerable elementary schools, where English would not otherwise be taught. Our goal is to equalize educational opportunities, as an understanding of English is a prerequisite for higher education in Chile, but English class is not a resource that many elementary schools are able to provide... My 30 favorite parts about Santiago are my 30 wonderful third graders seen in the picture [to the right]. Their determination and optimism, despite the fact that many are dealing with difficult home lives, never stops amazing me... I know that participating in the mosaic [The Global Climate Change Mosaic (COP20) in 2014] has helped me in a countless number of ways to succeed at this work and in this culture and I've been able to include my knowledge from the mosaic in our environmental projects.



# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

# Dickinson

Dickinson College  
P.O. Box 1773  
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1185  
csc@dickinson.edu

[www.dickinson.edu/homepage/572/community\\_studies\\_center](http://www.dickinson.edu/homepage/572/community_studies_center)

## CURRENT/UPCOMING MOSAICS

### Meltdowns and Waves mini Mosaic: Responding to Disasters in the U.S. and Japan

Summer 2016

To apply please visit the [Center for Global Study and Engagement](#).

[Marcus Key](#) (Earth Sciences) and [Alex Bates](#) (East Asian Studies)

.....

### Mediterranean Migration Mosaic: Italy at the Crossroads

Spring 2016

[Marcelo Borges](#) (History), [Nicoletta Marini-Maio](#) (Italian), and [Susan Rose](#) (Sociology and Community Studies)

.....

### Cuba mini-Mosaic

January 2016

[Mark Aldrich](#) (Spanish) and [Margaret Frohlich](#) (Spanish)

.....

### Race and Education Mosaic: Assessing American and South African Education since Civil Rights and the end of Apartheid

Fall 2015

[Jeremy Ball](#) (History and Africana Studies) and [Sarah Bair](#) (Education)

Tony Moore, Contributing Writer for the *Dickinson Magazine*, wrote an [article](#) about this exciting mosaic.

And see the November issue of the Dickinson Magazine for Michelle Simmons' article on the Mosaics.

## COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER STEERING COMMITTEE

Susan Rose > Director

Meta Bowman > Academic Coordinator

Jeremy Ball

Neil Leary

Marcelo Borges

Shalom Staub

Joyce Bylander

Amy Steinbugler

Jim Ellison

Julie Vastine

Sharon Kingston



Visit us on [YouTube](#) to view documentaries produced at Community Studies .



Friend us on [Facebook](#) to keep up to date with our new Mosaics, visitors and events!