

MOSAIC

Our Global Grinnell

Spring 2012



*Maslenitsa celebration...
“Farewell to winter, Welcome spring!”*



Dear Readers,

A warmer winter, and the prospect of spring and a fruitful summer are on the horizon as the global Grinnellian completes another semester of success. Once again, MOSAIC wants to capture your tales with new articles, stories, photos and more, to catch everyone's eye!

In this issue we have intentionally drawn from a variety of voices, on and off campus, with a special eye to the activities of individuals who are far away from their countries and their homes. With input from faculty, students and alumni, this edition promises to excite and motivate you to continuing your adventures! We hope you will enjoy reading, as much as we have enjoyed exploring the crevices of global experiences that Grinnellians participate in. From visiting home for the first time in ages, to being a Third Culture Kid, we have compiled just a few of the many unique voices that make Grinnell pervasively global.

Grinnellians never stay still. This issue will ignite some brilliant ideas of how to continue conquering the map! We are eager to hear about your adventures, and how you contribute to our diverse campus community - and we invite your contributions for future publications.

Happy reading! - **Naina Chhiber '13**
MOSAIC Editor

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Opinions expressed in MOSAIC do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editor, SPARC, OISA or CIS. Stories and photos are presented by volunteer writers, and expressed in an atmosphere of intellectual inquiry, critical thinking, and safe space.

On The Cover: Maslenitsa *Photo compliments of Todd Armstrong, Russian Dept.*



On the 25th of February, about 30 students and faculty gathered at the Russian House on Park Street to welcome spring with the celebration of Maslenitsa. Maslenitsa is a traditional Russian holiday, symbolizing the end of winter and the beginning of Lent. People eat bliny (Russian pancakes) which represent the sun, and they burn a chuchelo (scarecrow) a symbol of winter.

Thanks to the Russian Department, Language Assistant, and House Coordinator, students had the chance to enjoy pancakes with traditional toppings like caviar, sour cream, jam and honey. Alana Vogel, a senior Russian major, said *"It was fun to spend time with Russian majors and faculty! I quickly lost count of how many bliny I ate."*

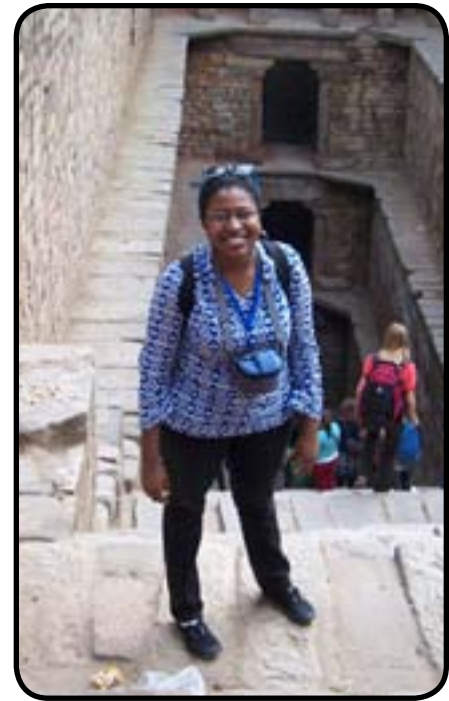
In addition to pancakes, students sampled Russian tea, candy, and a stewed fruit drink called kompot. After a tasty meal, students took part in burning the chuchelo made by Todd Armstrong. Even students with little or no Russian experience happily took part. Patrick Young, a senior German major, participated too: *"I really like the idea of promoting cultural events, and the number of people who showed up proves that this celebration was a real success."*

- Kelly Iacobazzi '12 & Yulia Fedoseeva, Russian Language Assistant

The Watson In Wadzi

- Wadzanai Motsi '12

Wadzi is a senior at Grinnell, originally from Harare, Zimbabwe. Her Watson is titled "Speaking Up: Unearthing the Motivation for Youth Political Activism." Over the coming year, she will travel to Tunisia, Ghana, the Czech Republic and Cambodia, to learn about the motivation for political activism amongst students and youth. Wadzi's visits are timely, as these nations gear up for their national elections. She will attend student union meetings, work with youth organizations, visit political spaces, and converse with people about why youth have become so involved in the political arena.



Wadzi, in Delhi, India Feb. 2011

I had been thinking about applying for the Watson for a really long time. I first found out about it from an advisor at the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section in Zimbabwe, and when I came to Grinnell I made sure to attend several information sessions about the fellowship. Each year, Grinnell would nominate four seniors for a chance to compete with other nominated seniors from colleges around the country, and each year it seemed to be a guessing game about who might win the fellowship. My first year, none of the nominated seniors won the award, my second year one did, and my third year three did. From these random outcomes, I quickly realized that this was the type of thing that would be amazing if I won it, but chances were I probably wouldn't.

Over the past three and a half years, every semester I would walk into Doug Cutchins' office with a new idea, another brilliant way in which to tie my life experiences to my interests - and win over the Watson committee. I knew my idea wasn't entirely formed yet, and each time I talked with Doug I left realizing that there was something about this process that I wasn't quite understanding.

When I returned from my study abroad experience, I decided that I wouldn't apply for the fellowship unless I really had a great project, rather than applying simply because it was a great opportunity. This decision changed how I approached the opportunity and ultimately led me to create a project that truly reflects who I am now, and who I want to be in the future. Settling on an idea was the hardest part. Once I was able to pinpoint where my passion and experience intersects, articulating that to others was not necessarily easy, but it was definitely easier. I talked about my project with a lot of people who know me well, and their knowledge of who I am and who I aspire to be, as well as their advice, helped shape my final Watson project.

Though there was a significant amount of preparation that went into my application, it was clear to me that the final outcome really boiled down to a confluence of factors that I couldn't predict. Essentially, once my application was submitted, my interview done, the process was no longer in my control. I knew that there might never be a satisfactory answer to questions about the outcome but that I had to be prepared for that and accept that outcome, regardless. So come Thursday March 15th, at 11:03, as I was waiting for the Watson Foundation to upload the list of their fellows, I was nervous, excited, hopeful, hesitant all in one breath. I think that is why my reaction to finding my name amongst the list of the fellows was screaming and tears all at once.

For me this opportunity is a dream come true, but not necessarily because I get to travel to Tunisia, Ghana, Cambodia and the Czech Republic. Not even because I am learning about the motivation for youth political activism, a topic which is really fascinating for me. Instead this is a dream come true because I get to live my life, learn from other people and pursue my dreams in ways I never thought possible. That I think is the point of the Watson. As Doug Cutchins always advises, 'it's not so much about the project as it is about the person.' I see this as the first major step in a life long journey, and I am excited to see what my year on the Watson has to bring!

Congratulations... and Safe Travels!

Read more about Wadzi's Watson plans at:
<http://www.grinnell.edu/news/releases/grinnell-college-student-awarded-watson-fellowship>

Davis Projects For Peace: Straws Of Steel

- Ashraya Dixit '14

During the summer of 2011, I travelled to Kapilbastu District in the south of Nepal to introduce to local farmers a building technique using Straw-Bales, an idea that seems so ordinary here in the Midwest, especially Iowa. The Davis Projects for Peace Foundation provided me with a generous grant to implement this project. Thanks to Doug Cutchins and the Peace Studies nominating committee, I was able to return home to Nepal during the summer, to spend time in the village of Shivagadi with the members of the Manakamana Cooperative. It was the first time straw bales have been used to construct a building there. This effort helps promote low cost, efficient and safe buildings, while encouraging local people to pursue such interests as an enterprise and promote harmony in the community.

I spent my first month in Kathmandu working on a pilot building with ISET-N. We built a small load-bearing straw bale building within the premise of their office, using this new technology for the first time in Nepal. This was a learning process with a lot of trial and error, and a lot of improvisation. During the time, I also contacted the members of Manakamana Cooperative to discuss the budget and building site. I went back again to Shivagadi, along with representatives from ISET-N, to teach the locals how to build straw bales and to discuss what straw bales are with the larger community. As soon as enough bales were made, I returned a third time to teach members of the cooperative how to raise walls. During the visit, we helped the cooperative raise an inside wall. This was a different technique than the one we had used in the pilot building in Kathmandu, and required a little tweaking of strategies.

Beyond some delays with the monsoon, the project went very well. The most important aspect of working with straw is not to get it wet, and the summer rain did not help. It also presented a challenge for earthen plastering, which needs low humidity, as we saw in the pilot building that takes a long time to dry. The people of the Manakamana Cooperative took in the technology well and saw great potential in it. They were able to identify this new technology as a new skill for livelihood development, and were even considering making furniture with the bales. They were pleased, and somewhat astonished, as to how useful these bales could be, even though most of their houses were built of straw, and were quite eager to see the finished product. There were countless local reporters and members of nearby villages, all curious about the project and wanting to see and use the new technology as well. This new skill and knowledge can now be shared or even exported to different villages, and lead to more dialogue and harmony in Southern Nepal.



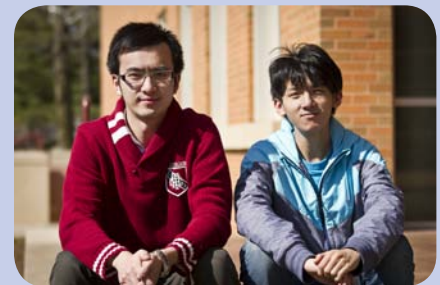
With such a level of acceptance of a new technology it seems that in time this idea can spread to further parts of Nepal. The building has not been completed yet, and is in the process of being so with the members of the Manakamana Cooperative still actively working on it. I, along with ISET-N, will further spread the outcome of the project through various media outlets once the building is done. The next step for forwarding straw bales in Nepal is to make a couple of more pilot projects and have more test cases across varied geographies. Working with people from Shivagadi really did put a positive spin on introducing straw bales to Nepal. Their enthusiasm, and ability to learn and improvise with materials so local to them, was very uplifting and gave an impression that this idea of straw bale houses in Nepal may have a future.

CONGRATULATIONS to this year's Grinnell recipients:

Xiaorong Yin '14 & Tinggong Zhan '14

Their project, "50 Yuan that Can Change Lives" is an internet-based micro-lending platform, with a focus on Yiyuan County in Zibo, China.

Davis Projects for Peace is an invitation to undergraduates to design grassroots projects to contribute to world peace. The most promising are funded at \$10,000. The Prize is made possible by Kathryn Wasserman Davis, internationalist and philanthropist.



The Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship

- Mateo Jarquin '13

Last spring, I entered the Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF), a program funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation and designed to increase the number of minority scholars in U.S. higher education. Being a “mellon” has been a great experience, so I would like to tell a bit of my story with the aim of encouraging all students to explore the many academic opportunities that exist, on campus and beyond.

MMUF gives talented undergraduates of diverse backgrounds generous stipends and research funds, to conduct serious independent scholarship, learn about the benefits of a career in academia, and hopefully pursue a career as a professor at a U.S. institution of higher education. In addition to financial support for independent research projects, MMUF provides fellows with a nation-wide network of scholars, dedicated mentoring from faculty advisors and program coordinators, academic support in the graduate and professional spheres, and some undergraduate loan repayment. Grinnell's MMUF fellows (typically five juniors and five seniors) meet weekly to discuss their projects, plan for graduate school, and learn from visiting lecturers.

Thanks to this financial support and close mentoring, I've been able to conduct extensive research on U.S. relations with 1950s revolutions in Bolivia, Cuba, and Guatemala. Last summer, my travel budget allowed me to spend five weeks in Washington, DC to study State Department records at the U.S. National Archives. I had the opportunity to use the same sources that professional scholars in the field use – a unique experience for an undergraduate researcher. As I apply to graduate school in History, my experience with primary documents and scholarly writing will serve me well. This summer, I hope to publish an article in the Mellon foundation's undergraduate journal. Of course that will depend on how good I am at using the resources at my disposal!

Programs like MMUF offer much beyond the material benefits. Participating in the program has allowed me to create my work in collaboration with other young scholars, where our research and our career plans are also discussed. The result is an environment of mentorship – peer mentorship, and more vertical mentorship between faculty and students. Working in this milieu is wonderful, as the people around you are constantly supporting you with advice, encouragement, and constructive criticism. Of course, all of this group support is intended to push us towards the ultimate program goal – to address the unfortunate lack of diversity in academe.

**MMUF is open only to U.S. citizens and Permanent Residents.*



Grinnell's Mellon-Mays Fellows at a Mellon Foundation Regional Conference at the University of Chicago: Isaiah I Iboko '12, Sophie Fajardo '12, Nidia Bautista '12, Debbie Cifuentes '13, Melissa Vasquez '12, Mateo Jarquin '13, Katie In '13, Joy Sales '13, Nancy Repreza '13, Lizeth Gutierrez '12, Laura Garcia '11.

Talk to your adviser, department chair, the Career Development Office, and the Office of Social Commitment to research the variety of unique academic fellowships, awards, and exciting opportunities that might be available to YOU!!

“Islam In America” - - In Grinnell

Varun Nayar '15, spent time with Daniel Strong, Curator of the Islam in America - a 'one-of-it's-kind' exhibition at Grinnell College's Faulconer Gallery:

Q: How did you conceptualize the idea of bringing the American Qu'ran exhibit to Grinnell?

“A couple of years ago [2010], I went to an exhibition in New York that featured these pieces”. He asked the curators if it was possible for Grinnell to be a venue, when these pieces went on tour, and with this, Grinnell signed on as one of the first venues for Birk's tour. “The project is still a work in process. Grinnell's exhibit has only 61 of a total of 141 pieces (about half). The College now owns chapters 36 and 37.”

Q: How did students, staff and outside visitors respond to this collection?

“There was a great deal of positive response from the community. The exhibition was very warmly received. We had been a bit worried about the opinions and potential reactions from more conservative voices, whether Christian or Muslim.” He later specified that there was no conflict that came up, “These pieces are not intended to be provocative.” He added “how better to educate one population about another culture or faith, than to place it right there in front of them.”

Q: What first attracted you to this project, and how has your interest progressed over time?

“What drew me to the exhibition was that it's quite an undertaking! He [Birk] is not Muslim.” He also spoke about how relatable this outsider's view is, towards this kind of art. “It's been very illuminating for me to hear all the discussions, and the words from the panel [referring to the panel discussion that took place between Muslim students and faculty on campus]. I myself am learning a lot about the Islamic faith and culture!”

Varun and Naina also spoke with Tilly Woodward, Curator of Academic and Public Outreach, about the broader purposes of exhibitions like this one, and their role in the Grinnell community. There has been a lot of active participation on the part of area children. Pre-school groups, girl scouts, after school groups and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program are among the many visitors engaged in both touring the exhibition and hands-on projects. It is part of Tilly's job as Curator of Academic and Public Outreach to encourage attendance and engagement in the gallery's efforts. She shared that “there has been a lot of hands on activity for parents and children-- things to see and do. Children have had the opportunity to learn a bit of Arabic calligraphy, draw and write about what it means to be good, make prints, and sew contemplative rugs.” The “contemplative rugs” project involved having children sew together fabric to create a personal space they could sit on to consider what it means to be good, both while viewing the exhibition, and later in their homes. “We are trying to encourage kids to think about what it is to be 'good' through the process of looking at the exhibition, talking about the exhibition, and making art.”

When asked about the reactions of students in the Grinnell community, Tilly emphasized the excitement with which the exhibition has been initially received. She said “The involvement of Grinnell students in the panels and discussions is very pleasing. Over 70 people from the campus and the community came to the first panel.” Tilly usually expects 30 – 40 guests at gallery talks and panels and so had to arrange extra seating at the last minute. In addition to high attendance, she said “our guests asked very thoughtful questions, and are genuinely interested in learning.” Further, she noted that most guests haven't read the Qur'an, and seeing the script and the images of daily American life helps them gain understanding of Islam in the context of their own country. ” An important aspect of Sandow's pieces is to build and encourage cultural understanding through representations in his focused work as an illustrator. In addition, Tilly mentioned that having the exhibition and programs at the Faulconer helped counter stereotypes of Iowa 's rural and provincial lifestyle, despite which (or perhaps with credit due) many Muslims have come to feel welcome and comfortable in our state.



Los Angeles-based artist Sandow Birk transcribed and illustrated an English translation of the Qur'an, the Holy Book of Islam. He combined the handwritten texts with images drawn from contemporary American life. This exhibition, in Faulconer Gallery, was complimented by a brilliant series of discussions and outreach activities - including a live performance by a Muslim punk band, The Kominas.

"I really enjoyed participating in the round table discussion. For me and a few other speakers, I know it was one of the first times we have publicly expressed some of our views about the Quran and about our experiences growing up with Islam, to a wide audience of attentive listeners."

- Lana Mahgoub '14



I was pleasantly surprised this semester when I first found out about the "American Quran" art exhibit that was on display at the Faulconer Gallery. In the subsequent weeks I realized that there was a remarkable amount of programming related to Islam and Muslims this semester. Excited and curious, I decided to attend (almost) every event—to very mixed reactions.

First of all was the American Quran exhibit. As someone who enjoys art, I thought it was interesting and well executed. As a Muslim, I wasn't entirely sure how I felt about it. On one hand, it was an amazing attempt by someone to create a representation of how Muslims are a concrete and undeniable part of American life. On the other hand, as someone who has never seen an illustrated translation of the Quran, it definitely threw me off.

More than the exhibit itself, I enjoyed the discussions concerning being Muslim in America. I was happy to see the level of interest these garnered, both from townspeople and people from the college. There were times when I felt upset, when I noticed that some people still had clear prejudices. In the best moments, I felt really touched by the concern and interest that people showed in Islam and in my experience as a Muslim.

It didn't, however, end on a good note for me. I was left fuming after the Michael Muhammad Knight events. After reading a handout with some lyrics that he had penned, I walked out and proceeded to have a long conversation with a friend about the thin line between freedom of speech and offensiveness. Overall, I had very different reactions to very different events. I greatly appreciated the fact that Grinnell put this together, and felt pleased by the interest that people showed. While I struggled and was upset by some of the ways my faith was represented I appreciate that art and dialogue often intend to challenge those who engage with it."

- Mariam Asaad '14

According to Islamic devotional traditions, the Qur'an is really the Qur'an only in its language of revelation: Arabic. Versions of the Qur'an in other languages are typically called "renderings" rather than translations – they communicate meaning, but cannot be the text itself as communicated by God to humanity via the Prophet Muhammad. In this sense, although the Qur'an surrounds us in some fashion, the gallery itself remains a secular space, the works before you expressions of human creativity rather than divine communication.

In another sense, however, the gallery does represent something of a sacred space. If the questions and claims about justice, charity, responsibility, humility, and community that we find in the meaning of the Qur'an promote thoughtful engagement with the world around us, then perhaps the exhibition does sanctify this space as community space. In mosques the mihrab, or prayer niche, orients devotional prayer in the direction of Mecca, drawing Muslims from around the world into a common experience. The mihrab in this exhibition can similarly focus our attention, encouraging us to ask what creates a common American experience and what justice, charity, responsibility, humility, and community mean in an American context. The individual pieces in this exhibition—each with its own text and image—provide further occasion to think through many of these same questions.

The juxtaposition of text and image in the American Qur'an both draws on and departs from traditions of Qur'anic illumination. Ornamentation of the Qur'an typically consists of geometric patterns, steering clear of human or animal representations for fear of raising the profane to the level of the sacred. Two of the three panels rendering the first sura (chapter) of the Qur'an, The Opening (Al-Fatiha), playfully draw on this tradition. There are, however, plenty of artistic traditions in Muslim communities that don't conform to this style, reminding us that, as with Islam more generally, we cannot reduce Islamic art to a set of abstract orthodoxies. Rather, we must consider the work in its context. Many of the images in the exhibition's panels draw on scenes that will be familiar to a good number of you. This makes it possible to connect the text to life in America in incredibly meaningful ways.

American Qur'an illustrates that Islam's presence in America is not limited to the approximately 6,000,000 Muslims living in the United States. This exhibition's works, created by a non-Muslim artist, suggest that Islam has more than ever before become part of the broader system of values from which Americans draw to evaluate the world around us.

**- Caleb Elfenbein, Assistant Professor
of Religious Studies and History**

Indian TCK's In Africa

TCK is short for Third Culture Kid - a child who spends a significant period of their developmental years in a culture outside of their parent's passport culture.

Chinar Verma '13



Chinar at a beach in Tanzania with friends.

Having been born in India, moving to Tanzania when I was only 7 years old was a strange transition. Growing up in the beautiful city of Dar Es Salaam, I couldn't help but fall in love with Tanzanian culture, and I quickly became a unique hybrid of Indian and Tanzanian. My father's job motivated the move, but my brother and I cemented this 'temporary move' by refusing to ever move away. Dar had become home. Going back to visit family in India was always a bit unsettling - I was treated so differently all of a sudden, and I was not considered "completely Indian" anymore. Back home in Tanzania, I would get the occasional, "You are brown skinned, you cannot be Tanzanian." or "You don't even have a Tanzanian passport!" Yet, there are so many Asians who have assimilated into the culture for over a century, that there are few who would contest our "Tanzanian-ness". Despite ethnic divisions in the city, it's hard to imagine Dar without its diversity. This is the life I have come to love in Tanzania.

When I arrived in Grinnell, I got the same question I had encountered since I was 7: "Which do you like better? India or Tanzania?" There is no answer in my heart for that question. During IPOP we were asked to make a map of the world by sitting roughly where our countries were located. I was lost at first, but finally decided to sit right under the horn of Africa - where Tanzania would be. Oh, the looks I got from those sitting in the Indian subcontinent. One of my new friends yelled, "TRAITOR!" I wasn't offended. I was used to this. I don't mind explaining my situation and seemingly confused identity. I am proud of being a Third Culture Kid, and I wouldn't switch my childhood for the world.

- Chinar Verma '13

Henna Jobanputra '15

I am Henna, a first year from Tanzania. Many reading this would have the question in their mind as to how can 'Henna' be a 'Tanzanian'? If she is from Africa, why isn't she Black? I am a fourth generation Tanzanian from the paternal side of my family. While I have Indian origins, and I practice Hindu culture, that does not make me an Indian. I am a South Asian Tanzanian, neither African nor Indian.

I feel like I live in two separate, yet combined worlds. At home, and with fellow South Asians, I speak in Gujarati, my mother tongue. With the rest of the citizens, I speak Swahili. I studied in an international school, learning English as my first language. At home (in my house) I behave like an "Indian" - and outside home I transform and act native. I celebrate Hindu cultural events, yet I love Tanzanian cuisine. I have South Asians friends as well as African friends. Isn't that flawless!? I fit perfectly into two different worlds!

I took my 50-50 personality for granted until I came to Grinnell College - where it was thought to be super cool, exotic and a very big deal. Several times I've heard, "Wow! You can speak Swahili? That is so cool! I wish I could speak some exotic language!" Together with this awe, however, came confusion about who exactly I am. I have awkward moments continuously, when everyone automatically assumes I am from India - since I look Indian and have an Indian name. One person assumed I was from Pakistan, because of my name 'Henna'. This constant misinterpretation can be slightly annoying, yet highly amusing for me - and sometimes embarrassing for the other person. Now that I think about it, it indeed is "cool" that I can speak Swahili. Apart from me, only Chinar can speak that language. We can talk in Swahili, and no one else here will understand. Awesome! So that is the story of my life, I do not find myself confused over the conflicting identities, instead I love it. I am a proud Tanzanian!

- Henna Jobanputra '15



*Henna in her own paradise!
Nothing can beat "home"
- sun & sand!*

Kajari Ghosh '12

Hi! I'm Kajari, a fourth year Economics Major. Since coming to Grinnell, the following exchange has occurred frequently:

Q: Where are you from? A: Zambia...
[Acquaintance gawks, as I'm clearly not of African descent. So I explain that my parents are Indian.]
Q: So, what ARE you? A: Hmm... Good question!

My parents moved to Zambia in the '80s where I lived until I was 18. This has resulted in me having a distinctly non-Indian outlook on my environment, conduct, interactions and social culture. However, we used to visit India every two years, and, at home we had a strictly Bengali upbringing, which included learning to speak, understand, read and write both Bengali and Hindi. Caught between these two cultures, India and Zambia, I find that the people I feel most comfortable with are other Third Culture Kids - those who experience this similar upbringing. The culture of mobility.

While I carry an Indian passport, I was born in Zambia and hold the right (until I am 22) to apply for Zambian citizenship. However, neither India nor Zambia allow dual citizenship. This means that I cannot, legally, reconcile these two significant parts of my identity. Furthermore, I have developed yet another identity since coming to the United States. Attending Grinnell College has further complicated my identity, as I have found myself attached to yet another place and people. This is particularly disconcerting as graduation approaches, because the U.S. will no longer be my home, and my ability to stay here depends on employment sponsorship and immigration regulations.

Despite these difficulties, I believe that my unique upbringing, between and across borders, has given me a special global and comparative perspective. I don't need a legal document to declare myself a true citizen of the world. My identity is not confined to or delimited by any borders.

- Kajari Ghosh '12



Kajari, at Wupatki Indian Ruins, in Flagstaff AZ

Naina Chhiber '13

My father had a conversation with a group of geography teachers from the U.S., on a train from Italy to France:

Teacher: "So where is your family coming from?"
Father: "The Seychelles. I'm sure you've seen it on a map."

Teacher: "Seychelles. Hmmm... Where is it again?"

Unlike many Third Culture Kids, I was thrown back into my first culture at the age of 15, after spending nearly 8 years on a small island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Close to Madagascar, Mauritius and Reunion, Seychelles is one of the smallest countries, consisting of an archipelago of 250 islands. It is often left out from maps.

How did I land up there when I was born in the big and bustling city of New Delhi, India? My father's job took us to Seychelles in 1999. We left when I was 6, and I had told my friends that I was going for a holiday and would "see them soon." Little did I know that "soon" would be 8 years, interspersed with frequent holiday trips to India to keep me connected to my Indian culture. I attended an international school and began learning French from the age of 7, and I also became used to the carefree island lifestyle of going to the beach and living on a diet of fish and makeshift Indian spices. Seychelles has one of the smallest economies of the world, and most things we needed were purchased during our annual visit back to India. A suitcase full of spices, lentils, 'atta' and Hindi textbooks from my grandparents would come to my house yearly. As the youngest in the family, my parents were constantly afraid that I'd grow up to be Sechellois rather than Indian - so I was constantly ingrained with Hindi books and Indian history. I was living a parallel life.

Living in such a small community meant that everyone knew everyone else. This is something that has helped me be very accepting of small communities - like Grinnell. Leaving Seychelles was probably harder than leaving home for boarding school, since my most formative years were spent on this island with little distractions and great relationships. I definitely felt, and sometimes still feel like a "fish out of water" in India - where people asked me questions like: "But you're not African? Did you live in a mud hut?" My answer was always simple, because as a Third Culture Kid, I know that I am broader than one national identity.

Indians in Grinnell sometimes tease me, but I have gotten used to this. I am very accepting of my mixed heritage, and I wouldn't change it for the world! Teachers still wonder if I live in Seychelles or visit Africa frequently, but I guess no one will really quite understand the TCK life-style, until they live it themselves.

-Naina Chhiber '13

How The Liberal Arts Stimulated My Desire For A Career In Public Economic Health

- Christa Lee '12

North Korea: One of the poorest countries in the world borders the country where I was born, South Korea. As a child, I never questioned why we South Koreans had health care services available to us, while many of our North Korean neighbors died each second from the lack of any form of medical care. I grew up hearing the South Korean government blame the North for its greed and corruption on a daily basis, and I had no doubt that a regime change would save the North Korean people.



A group of Cambodian students, learning traditional farm methods in an area community farm.

Cambodia: After graduating from an all-girls' private boarding high school in Canada, I was gripped by youthful thoughts about how transparent government institutions, the democratic process, and fair economic competition would allow governments to better respond to the needs of their people. A trip to Cambodia, however, demonstrated to me that some countries were not able to help their people, because they simply lack the financial resources to do so. Staying in a small town, and working with a Korean NGO group, I closely observed the daily lives of middle- and lower-class Cambodians. When I fell ill from drinking rainwater, I came to understand the serious reasons that lead to such high infant mortality rates. The corrupt Cambodian government, also lacking sufficient funds, was losing children - the future generation of the country, to dirty water, lack of vaccination, and limited medical services. Still, I didn't want to stop believing that regime change and financial support would be able to resolve these issues.

Albania: Labeled and written off as a poverty-stricken country, Albania has received a great deal of financial and political support from the rest of the EU. Having attracted other European countries to invest in its medical sector, it could provide some of its people with a decent level of health care. Yet, while spending the holiday season in Roma communities, I frequently witnessed their medical issues. More significantly, I recognized that to the Albanians, "Albanian" does not include the Roma; the Romani people are disenfranchised. Sadly, these Romani, accepting their place at the margins, did not assert their rights to their government and towards "their people." In order for Romani to access medical services, I realized that the social and cultural structure needed to change, not only in Albania, but in Europe as a whole. My experience volunteering with the Romani people left me with an unanswered question: how does a culture transform in order to institute a better health care system? While struggling with this question, I began to realize my developing interest in international health economics.



The view from one's window, for the Romani.

These three distinctive experiences have reaffirmed and shaped my interest in the field of health economics and policy. At the same time, my life experiences have led me to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue a career of service in this field. Motivated by the passion to know people different from me, and to live in a place not like my home, I left South Korea at the age of 11 and went to Canada, and at 18 moved to yet another country, the U.S.A. I learned to focus on the needs of others through my experience living with six different host families, each of distinctive racial, religious, and familial backgrounds. I became a residence prefect at a boarding school with a varying age-range. After three years at Grinnell, one of the most rigorous liberal arts colleges in the U.S., I have grown in my eagerness to experience diverse people and communities across the globe. The liberal arts curriculum has encouraged me to understand a variety of academic disciplines - from my Rock-n-Roll drum lessons, to studying the Trinity in my religion class. Building on my personal experiences, the fundamental and critical skills that I have gained at Grinnell will support me throughout my career path and my life.

As I leave Grinnell, I want to impart a valuable lesson that I have learned: open yourself to new experiences. They will form who you are, what you believe in, and what your life pursuits will be. More importantly, be excited by how these experiences will transform you to your truer self.

Tunisia: An Update From Paris?

Q & A with Meriem Trabelsi '13



Q: What are the most significant changes you've witnessed in your homeland?

A: What hasn't changed! Since 2011, Tunisians have witnessed change in every aspect of their lives: political, social, and religious. Unexpected revolution led to an unprecedented upheaval in our political system. The elite that had ruled for decades vanished by fleeing or imprisonment. Soon after, the long-oppressed political forces (mostly Islamists) reappeared stronger and more organized. Nine months later, Tunisia held the first free and fair elections in our history. Surprisingly, the moderate Islamist party Ennahdha (The Renaissance) won 40% of the seats in the Assemblée Nationale Constituante. At the beginning, many thought that was a catastrophe, but I soon came to accept that being an Arab and Muslim country, Tunisia had no choice if we were to become a true democracy. Many argued that democracy and Islamism could never go together, but this is the time for innovation. Only time will tell if Muslim nations can become real democracies (by the Western definition), or if they are doomed to remain under either the oppression of tyrants, or worse: religion! I think that time will show us that we must find a hybrid system in which basic freedoms and human rights are guaranteed, and religion has a recognized political role.

Q: What is the Tunisian youth movement, and how have you participated in it?

A: Many affirm that the Tunisian youth movement causes the Arab Spring. I am proud to hear such a thing, but I believe that the authoritarian regime and a fed-up society are what caused the revolution. The youth did set off a spark that started the fire. An unfortunate street-

vendor expressed his discontent by burning himself to death, and it continued with waves of equally frustrated young people invading the streets in the days that followed. Defining the youth movement is difficult, because it includes everything the youth have done since the start of 2011. As a student far away from home (in Grinnell last year, and now in Paris) I could only do so much. Over that first winter break, I was home to participate in protests in Tunis and Sousse, my hometown. I seriously considered taking a semester off, but my parents discouraged that, and once back at school I did my best to follow events through the internet. I spent a lot of time, perhaps more than I should have (my school work did suffer), trying to spread the word about everything happening at home. I was pleased to go home for the summer, and I got involved in a non-profit youth organization called SAWTY, Sawt Chabeb Tounes (My voice/vote, the voice/vote of Tunisia's youth). It was founded by Tunisian youth, in the months after Ben Ali left leadership. The objective of the group is to raise awareness among youth, especially in rural areas, and encourage them to be involved in politics. In preparation for the elections, our task was to convince people, young and old, of the importance of voting - without influencing their vote, of course. That was a difficult task, because our people are used to fake elections and convinced of the inutility of such practice. We spent three months traveling through the country by bus, stopping wherever people meet (i.e. coffee shops, markets, hotels, factories...). In the end, 90% of registered voters turned out to vote on the October 23rd, I am proud of the work SAWTY and other similar organizations did to help the elections succeed.

Q: You've witnessed much of the revolution from outside of the country. How do you remain connected from so far away?

A: Last year, my body was in Grinnell but all my soul and mind were back home. I did everything I could to stay connected with my family, friends, and the media. Here in France, it is easier to stay connected. Paris has a huge Tunisian community, and all the political parties have representatives. Besides the Tunisian-run conferences and meetings, many French institutions organize events with specialists from the Arab world. It is a pleasure to participate in such events with compatriots and friends. During the elections, I was lucky to be a national observer at the General Consulate of Tunisia in Paris. I saw thousands of Tunisians waiting hours in line to vote for the first time. They were proud of their blue finger - proof that they voted. Counting ballots with the officials and observers was the most intense and rewarding experience I have ever had.

Q: How does your love of home impact your daily life? Will it impact your career?

A: Having realized that everything can change extremely quickly anytime, I am now addicted to Facebook and other sources of information online. That is good and bad. It is good to know what is going on at home, but bad because it sometimes keeps me from enjoying the place I actually am. I chose Political Science as my major two years before the revolution happened. At that time, I thought I might study and work wherever opportunities lead me. I considered that I might end up returning home later on in my life, especially if Ben Ali and his wife would die or leave. Now, I can hardly wait to finish my studies and jump in! It is frustrating to see all that is happening - new political parties, non-profit organizations, and social movements; and not being able to participate right away. I am concentrating in Global Development Studies, and I hope that the combination with Political Science will enable me to do something useful in building a post-revolutionary democratic Tunisia.

Watching The School Of The Americas

- Joe Hiller '12

In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler asks a biting ethical question: "What makes for a grievable life?" (2006: 20) That is, why do certain deaths strike us so painfully while others flit only momentarily through our awareness, as statistics or tidbits of news but little more? Why do we feel—really feel—the loss of certain lives, and not others? Why do we mourn whom we mourn? Butler's answer is complex and pretty brilliant—read the book to know what she thinks. Here, though, I'm not writing about her. Rather, I want to meditate on an answer to her question by tracing why I think the work of the School of Americas Watch (SOAW) is so important.

The School of the Americas (SOA)—now renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)—is a military training center located within Fort Benning, Georgia. Since its inception in 1946, it has instructed more than sixty thousand Latin American soldiers and police officers. Many of those

students went on to commit egregious human rights violations in their home countries. The disturbing correlation between SOA training and subsequent participation in state terror began to come to light in the 1990s, when activists leveraged the Freedom of Information Act to gain access to both the names of SOA graduates and the SOA's own instruction manuals. As this information made clear, the SOA trained some vicious men, including eleven military dictators, architects of coups d'états and acts of genocide, and perpetrators of massacres and targeted assassinations. Furthermore, the school explicitly instructed its students in tactics of terror, from extortion to blackmail and abduction to torture. Perhaps most importantly, the school advocated a binaristic understanding of the world in which good and evil were rigidly fixed, with the military positioned as the lone, unquestionable guardian of that boundary. Thus, when military leaders decided a person or an organization represented "subversion" or "communism" or "radicalism" or another sort of nebulous menace, the SOA/WHINSEC prepared them—ideologically and methodologically—to take any measure to "neutralize" that perceived threat. Historically, this means that SOA graduates have targeted union organizers, indigenous people, students, religious leaders, sexual minorities, anarchists, farm workers and millions of others for brutal repression. From Chile to Mexico and Honduras to Haiti, the SOA/WHINSEC is synonymous with dictatorships, torture, death squads, desaparecido/as and terror.

Before I go on, let me clarify something: I do not think that everyone who works at or attends the SOA/WHINSEC is some sort of cruel monster. My grandfather served in the U.S. Army for decades, both domestically and abroad, in a capacity akin to that of SOA/WHINSEC instructors. I still love and respect my grandfather. He understood his role as a protective and positive one, as a way to shield the people he loved from harm and, beyond that, as a way to empower others to do good and beat back injustice. He was driven by laudable ambitions. In a way, this is what is most pernicious about an institution like the SOA/WHINSEC: it seizes upon noble ideas and twists and confines them to fit an unambiguous worldview, one that justifies, even requires, the use of coercive violence as a tool of social control. I find the SOA/WHINSEC repugnant, not because of the individuals who pass through its halls, but because of the remorseless military ideology that it represents, activates and perpetuates, and for the arrogance underlying its fundamental lesson, namely, that the military knows best and that political or social dissent is tantamount to treason, punishable by terror and death. This way of thinking necessarily reduces opponents to something less-than-human, to a sort of life not valuable enough to protect. Indeed, the violence promoted by the SOA/WHINSEC is two-fold: it is at once representational, in that it grants legitimacy to the military alone, barring all others from having a protected political voice, and material, in that it involves the outright destruction of people and bodies.



School of Americas Watch Partnership América Latina interns participate in a rally in solidarity with the people of Honduras in Barquisimeto, Venezuela.

From left: Joe Hiller (US), Jimena Paz Oliva (Honduras), Victor Alejandro Ramirez (Honduras), Rose Espinola (USA), Gabriela Uassouf (Argentina).

“But I think that we should speak about all the things that are happening around us. We are not evoking evil irresponsibly or in vain, for we have now become a part of it..”

- Tadeusz Borowski

This brings me back to the SOAW, the grassroots pacifist and anti-militarization organization that documents and denounces the effects of the SOA/WHINSEC. I think the SOAW is most compelling because it resists the logic at the core of the military paradigm outlined above: it folds everyone into the human community, refusing to relegate certain lives to the side of the disposable, the killable or the disappearable. For the SOAW, every life is valuable, and every grievance merits compassionate consideration. Conversely, the SOAW struggles to resist violence in all its interlocking forms, from overt military repression to environmental destruction, sexual abuse to homophobic discrimination. This is not to say the SOAW is perfect, only to celebrate its radically egalitarian and nonviolent ethos.

Each November, the SOAW organizes a massive convergence at the gates of Ft. Benning. This event serves many purposes; it is a site for community building, for education and information sharing, and for political expression. However, its crux is a public ritual of mourning, a somber Vigil commemorating and grieving the lives of those killed by graduates of the SOA/WHINSEC. Participants form a long, snaking line, thousands deep, and walk slowly toward the entrance of the fort while listening to a spoken/sung litany of the names of victims. After each name, everyone raises a cross or a fist and collectively chants “presente,” meaning, “we are here, we remember you.” This procession is crucial: it re-centers those very lives deemed most expendable by military forces, restoring their dignity and lingering over their loss. It is a powerful and emotive experience.

This leads me to my final point, and the reason for which I wrote this article. Each of my four years at Grinnell, I have taken part in a student-led trip to attend the SOAW Convergence & Vigil. These trips have been enormously influential—personally, they led to an internship with the SOAW Partnership América Latina in Venezuela, friendships with activists from across the hemisphere, and a deep and abiding commitment to the work of nonviolence. More broadly, though, I think these trips do something critical, and something that often evades us when we become immersed in the fervor of daily life. The SOAW Vigil is one of the few moments in which I felt able to break down and cry for people I never knew, to allow myself to open up to the pain and anguish wrought by decades of terror and repression. The Vigil forced its way through the bubble of intellectualism that shields me from really feeling the horror that, on one level, I know so much about. It transfigured abstract death into something tangible and sharp, something immediately present. Part of what makes lives grievable, I have come to realize, is the act of grieving them. And through that grief (I like to think) comes not only sadness, but also recognition of our ethical obligations to each other.

When someone’s death is made real, so too is their life—the grievable life is the one we care about, the one we want to see live, the one we want to protect and defend. From grief, then, springs a commitment to life.

And I think that’s beautiful.



Grinnellians remember and commemorate victims of military violence at the School of Americas Watch 2011 Vigil outside Ft. Benning, GA.

Georgia On My Mind... *(the country, not the state)*

- Aka Khipashvili '14 & Nata Nakaidze '15

When people ask where we are from, the answer - Georgia, is ambiguous. We usually add "the country, not the state!" The country of Georgia was named after St. George, the prominent saint for orthodox Christians. The State carries the name of King George II of Great Britain.

Georgia is located in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus. Positioned in the heart of the Silk Road, the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Georgia has long evoked interest of conquerors - from Alexander the Great in 4th century BC, to Greeks, Romans, Persians, Arabs, Ottomans and Russians in the 20th. The nation faced constant attempts at conquest, but none conquered it completely or permanently, and Georgia has evolved as a skilled survivor. We preserved our culture, and integrated sundry foreign traditions as well. Eastern Georgia was greatly influenced by the Muslim world, while Western Georgia - by Greece and Byzantium.

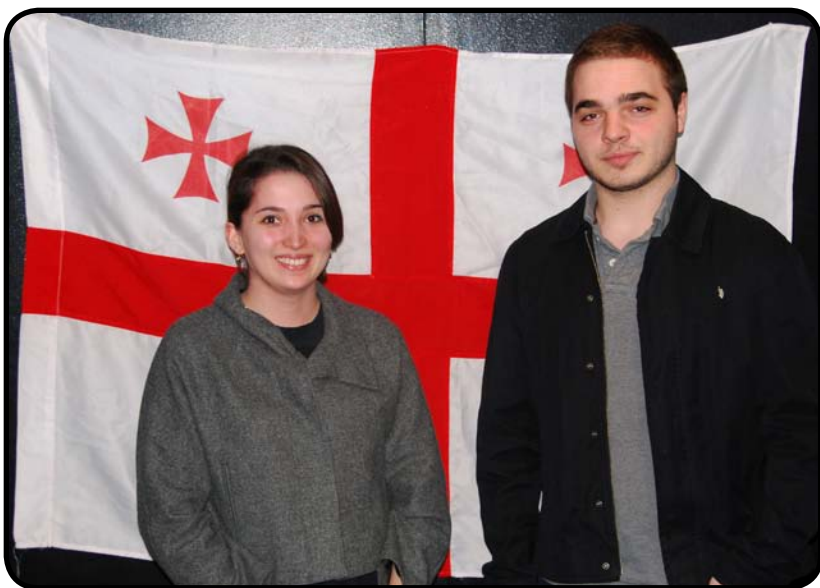
Famous as an Artist Colony, Georgia has charmed travelers and tourists for centuries. Jason and the Argonauts, of Greek mythology, came to seek the Golden Fleece in Colchis (in modern day Georgia). This legend, along with archaeological evidence, indicates a wealth of exceptional gold crafting. This history is also visible through frescoes in churches and monasteries, and in over 50 themed museums. Within the Russian Empire, our capital Tbilisi was a prime cultural center for the region. Under the Soviet Union, Georgian poets, writers, painters, filmmakers and athletes were respected for their talent. Ballet, opera, theater, dance concerts and museums have always been significant to our culture, and the frequency of performances still amazes our visitors. The Conservatory, State Choreographic Institute, and Academy of Art are highly developed institutions, providing Milan's La Scala and Hollywood with talented artists. Georgians have a passion for fashionable clothing, too. Poems have been written about the beauty of Georgian dresses, and the uniqueness of our outfits. Grinnellians will get to see traditional Georgian gowns at the ISO Cultural Evening this spring!

The Georgian folk ensemble, Zedashe, visited Grinnell. They impressed us with unique sounds, dance moves involving daggers, musical instruments (one was so unusual that Grinnell bought it), and traditional outfits. I (Aka) was approached with many questions about the performance, and my friends were surprised to hear that these dances and songs are a regular part of our birthday parties and casual get-togethers. Georgian dancers and folk musicians deserve warm appreciation and respect. These art forms have passed from generation to generation, and have survived to date - upholding national traditions on the international stage.

Walking through the streets of Tbilisi, you'll see modern skyscrapers next to ancient buildings. There are hundreds of churches, including the third tallest Orthodox church in the world, Sameba. Some date back to the 4th and 5th centuries. A good way to experience Georgia's artistic tradition is to view our 12th century frescos, in monasteries in Mtskheta (the ancient capital) or Betania. The best place to encounter Georgian hospitality is Leselidze Street in Tbilisi. Full of bars, restaurants, night clubs, and fashion museums, it's one of the best entertainment places in Georgia. Leselidze Street is also a symbol of hospitality and tolerance to diverse ethnicities and religions. Throughout the centuries, and still today, Catholics, Muslims, Jews and Orthodox Christians have prayed along Leselidze Street in their corresponding temples. It is essential to mention that even though Georgia has been conquered many times, and influenced by multiple invaders through the centuries, religious conflicts within the nation have been rare.

Wine is a central part of Georgian culture. The first sample of wine was discovered in Georgia around 6,000 BC. Wine consistently accompanies rich and savory cuisine on traditional feasts, called Supras. Alexander Pushkin said "every Georgian dish is a poem," and indeed, the diversity Georgian cuisine, enhanced by warm hospitality and meaningful toasts, provides an unforgettable experience.

Georgia is just a little bit bigger than the lovely state of Iowa, but the size of our nation does not limit us - or our guests, to enjoy life. During Spring, we can snow ski in the morning, then board a helicopter to fly over the national park, and within an hour we'll be riding jet-skis in the Black Sea. This is a Georgian adventure we both aspire to, once time and our budgets allow.



Nata and Aka, pictured with the Georgian national flag.

Georgia's unique location, and the mixture of eastern and western cultures, makes it challenging for us to find our specific place in the world. Historically conservative approaches to family values, the role of women in society, and the dependence of a younger generation on our parents, push us east. Newer trends of modernization, our government's political direction, close ties with the West, and the evolution of pop culture might drive us the opposite direction. For developing countries like Georgia, westernization is associated with modernization. From our two graduating classes alone (2010 and 2011), over 80 of our Georgian peers pursued higher education in the U.S. and Europe; looks like the decision has been made for us.

Coming to the U.S. has been a life-changing experience; it has made us more independent, and provided us with an opportunity to bring something new back home. Here at Grinnell we (Nata and Aka) met friends and instructors from around the globe, and discovered that we have a lot in common. We've all been shaped by different national histories, unique traditions and experiences – but we all love home and family deeply, and we have all made our investments in learning and growing. While our identity is forever embedded in our Georgian roots – we are also embracing our role in a larger world. Perhaps our ability to stand with one foot in the east and one foot in the west, is serving us well!



Nika Sakvarelidze returned home to Georgia after completing his Grinnell degree in **2009**. He is working as a project team leader at Ltd. Caucasus Online.

“I have loved every single thing about returning home to Georgia. At the same time, I do miss the stimulating environment and intellectual rigor of academic life in Grinnell.”

Nika recently represented Grinnell College at several regional College Fairs:

“I was surprised by how many students were already familiar with Grinnell College. They knew about our open-curriculum and self-governance, for example. That is a great achievement for the College, and I felt privileged to be a part of this effort!”

Nika is pictured here with two prospective students (left) and with our colleague Tamuna Jejilashvil (right), the University Placement Counselor at the American Academy in Tbilisi. Tamuna also worked with Aka and Nata (who authored the article on this page), to encourage their enrollment at Grinnell College!

MQ's Writes From The UN Force In Lebanon

- MQ Park '11

As a student at Grinnell, MQ Park, '10 served on the International Pre-Orientation Program's leadership team, and worked in the OISA. He initiated the first issue of MOSAIC! MQ was well known on campus for his part in the annual contributions of K-Pop, during the ISO Cultural Evening. After graduation, he joined the ROK Army in October 2010. He will be discharged this coming July and plans to pursue a career in the field of law.



All male Korean citizens are obliged to serve in the Korean Army. Service begins with an 8-week training course that teaches basic combat skills, after which the new recruits are deployed to bases all around Korea to serve the remaining months of service. The duration of service for Army Ground Forces, Marines, and the Navy is 22 months, and for the Air Force it is 24 months, after which the soldiers are discharged as a Sergeant.

< MQ is in the center, pictured with fellow ROKBATT (Republic of Korea Battalion) members.



Working alongside members of the international community... what does it really mean anyway? That thought had always lingered in my mind during the four years at Grinnell College. I think, through my experience in the Army, I came closer to an answer.

On July 26th, 2011, I boarded a military plane at the Seoul Airport to embark on a peace-keeping mission in Lebanon, far away from home. I had been selected as a military interpreter and personnel management specialist for the six-month tour of duty with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Consisting of 32 member nations, UNIFIL's main mission is to ensure a peaceful environment for the civilians in Southern Lebanon, monitor the termination of hostilities, and support the Lebanese Armed Forces with their deployment in the region all under the mandate of the UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

When I arrived in Lebanon, as a peacekeeper, I expected myself to be surrounded by life-threatening situations. Though I did experience a roadside bombing just a few miles away from my own vehicle, I was disappointed to be not involved with onsite operations. Instead, as an interpreter, I mainly liaised with officers of other nations especially during large-scale ceremonies: CHINBATT (China), GHANBATT (Ghana), ITALBATT (Italy), IRISHBATT (Ireland), INDBATT (India), and MALBATT (Malaysia), just to name a few. Though my duties were not exactly the type of peacekeeping work that I had imagined, I decided to consider this as an opportunity to represent my own country. When we invited other nations to our ceremonies, we ensured that everything (literally everything) was flawless; the steps of the marching troops had to be in perfect unison, the red carpet had to be dustless, and the chairs for the audience had to be not only crystal clean, but also aligned. Though such efforts were extremely difficult at first, after the end of each ceremony, we were applauded by all the invitees for such superb preparation. And that is where I truly felt accomplished and realized an important feature in working alongside members of the international community.

Indeed, each one of us is a diplomat of our home country. Each of our actions, our words, and thoughts are representative of our nation to the rest of the community. No one wants to be remembered as clumsy, disorganized, and inconsiderate. And that is exactly why we prepared so thoroughly to make sure that our ceremonies progressed flawlessly, thereby setting an impression. My experience with UNIFIL is also relevant to Grinnell College, one of the most internationally diverse institutions in the United States. In such an environment, each one of your actions counts, especially for those who have had no exposure to your culture. You are a representative – a diplomat – of your own country. And if each of us makes that extra effort to show the best of our qualities as an individual of our own nation, a harmonious, let alone peaceful environment would be easily within grasp, as I had experienced in the valuable six months in Lebanon.

Long Time No See...

- Michael Sawula '12

Michael Sawula '12 is a senior at Grinnell, majoring in Economics and Spanish. This winter, he went home to Uganda for the first time in two and a half years. Following graduation, Michael will move to Chicago, Illinois to work for financial services firm, Morningstar, Inc.

It had been two and a half years since I had last been home. It was Christmas day, and the unusual 4:00 a.m. arrival at Entebbe airport only compounded the surreal experience I was having. I was welcomed not only by the Ugandan warmth in the air, but also the warmth of family. Nothing compares to the comfort of being around the people you love the most. The cruel combination of jetlag and exhaustion, after two days of intercontinental travel, meant that I was limited to the confines of our house during my first few days back home. Words cannot describe how great the feeling was to sleep in my own bed. After a few days, feelings of excitement, nervousness, and curiosity drove me out of the house and led my exploration into how Kampala had changed during the long time I was away from home. During my two-and-a-half year hiatus, I had spent a semester in Spain, interned in Des Moines and San Francisco, and had the fortunate opportunity to travel extensively across the United States and Europe. After two and a half years of what felt like constant movement, it was not until I was in Uganda that I finally felt settled.

Kampala had grown. There appeared to be more buildings, people, cars, noise and pollution. Having left the relatively calm and relaxed environment of Grinnell, it was almost a reverse culture shock to return to a city where chaos appeared to run rampant in the streets. Counter-intuitively, this was very calming. I no longer felt like a foreigner, or had to adjust to being constantly labeled an international student. Despite the length of time I'd been away, most things felt familiar and I quickly adjusted to the Ugandan way of life. My parents, grandmother, cousins, uncles and other relatives barely changed since I last saw them. My closest friends from Uganda, though, now live and study in Europe or North America - so I had to adjust to experiencing Ugandan life without some of the people who I immediately associate with my life back home. This was a change. I delved deeper into family life, visiting the many relatives who I was keen to see. Nieces and nephews had been born during my time away, and for the first time in my life, I began to feel old!



Michael, at home in Uganda with his sisters Geraldine (Washington D.C.) and Olivia (San Francisco), and their father Gerald.



The global financial crisis hit Uganda very hard, and it was both humbling and shocking to see how poverty had spread throughout society. These are desperate times for the vast majority of the population, and sadly, it took seeing this for me to fully appreciate the incredible opportunities I have had in life. I was given daily reminders of the importance of hard work and dedication while I am abroad to study. In addition, being home helped me realize how much I have grown and matured during my time away. While certain things no longer interest me, I realized that I had developed a wide range of new interests. TV was no longer important to me, but remaining abreast of current world affairs had become a priority.

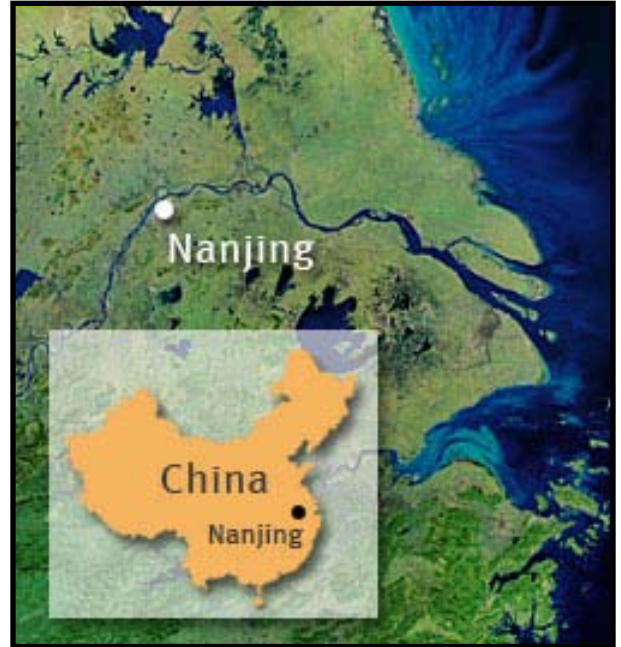
Returning home to Uganda for winter break, after such a long time away at a time where I am becoming an independent adult, was a much-needed reflective experience. It is easy to get caught up in the American way of life - but one must never forget their roots.

< Michael is pictured here with Eric Glustrom, President of Educate!, of Uganda, winner of Grinnell's Social Justice Prize 2011.

The Grinnell-Nanjing Partnership Comes Full Circle

The relationship between Grinnell College and Nanjing University has existed since 1987. Professor Andrew Hsieh of Grinnell's History Department is rightfully known as the "founder" of this exchange program. He helped facilitate the initial agreement when he took a group of Grinnellians to China in 1985. The partnership provided a language instructor to help with Grinnell's new Chinese language program, and an opportunity for a Grinnell graduate to teach English at a Nanjing high school. Each year now, two scholars come to Grinnell from Nanjing to do research, and one instructor comes to teach Chinese. Likewise, many Grinnell professors have travelled to Nanjing to teach their subject to Nanjing University students, including faculty from History, Computer Science, English, Chemistry, Physics, Russian, French, Sociology, Political Science, Philosophy, Art, and the Writing Lab. The partnership has grown to include a scholarship for a Nanjing high school student to attend Grinnell. The College selects one "Nanjing Scholar" from within the top four local high schools. Two rounds of interviews are involved: the first is made by each individual school, and the second by the Grinnell College students who are teaching English in Nanjing.

Later this spring, President Kington and Vice-President Paula Smith will travel to Nanjing to sign the next five-year agreement between Nanjing University and Grinnell College.



Nanjing is one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in China. It is celebrating its 110th anniversary this year. The campus has a number of important buildings, especially from the period when Nanjing was the capital of China.

Professor Meihui Lu is a Lecturer at Nanjing University, and a Visiting Instructor at Grinnell.



Early last August, probably the third day after we arrived in Grinnell, my daughter and I were playing in Central Park. A gentleman approached us and kindly asked, "Are you the Chinese instructor from Nanjing? I have been to Nanjing to teach there, many years ago." "Oh, yes I am!" As I introduced myself, my many curiosities about this exchange-program and about this tiny, quiet town, began to spill out. How is teaching American students Chinese different from teaching Chinese students English? *[Not so different in terms of teaching methods. The culture differences make teaching and learning more difficult, but fun.]* Are American students as hard-working as Chinese students? *[Students in Grinnell are super hard workers.]* How will my daughter survive without being able to speak English? *[She has been mostly happily learning and improving, with help from everyone around.]*

"Why Grinnell? Why teach Chinese?" I chose Grinnell because I'd rather teach Chinese to students who aim to master a language skill, rather than take it as merely an introductory course. At Grinnell, I have been pleased to see that students come to discover much more of this beautiful, culture-rich language. How wonderful to go beyond the ABC's (or, as we say in Chinese, "the one and two of it"). I made the right decision to come here. The extremely hard working Grinnellians motivate me to strive, and to polish my teaching without hesitations. Every step, small or big, that my students make in their language learning brings me satisfaction.

When it comes to everyday life, especially with an 8-year-old daughter (Emily) who speaks only the English she has learned since this past August, my gratefulness to the local community is beyond words. From the teachers and staff at Davis Elementary School, and the College faculty and staff, to our beloved neighbors and friends, Grinnell has warmly embraced us with attention, thoughtfulness, and love. Without the valuable friendships we have gained here, my daughter and I could not have had such a great experience with abundant harvest in our study, work, and our daily life.

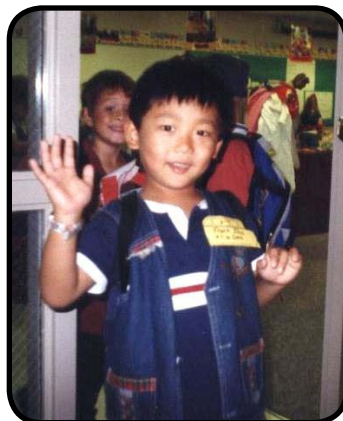
What began as a vague vision to share our language and culture with a people we did not know, has evolved to a multi-faceted exchange of caring, learning beyond the basics, and ongoing questions at all levels of life. My daughter Emily and I have made the Nanjing Exchange our own, to share with the entire community.

Fanchao “Frank” Zhu ‘15

I remember my American kindergarten (Mrs. Godar still teachers here), the slides in the Fairview School playground, Gates Tower on the campus, and the deep piles of golden leaves during autumn in Iowa. It was the first time I saw the movie Star Wars, and I remember sitting in mom’s office to watch one episode after the other. I also remember Grinnellians were super friendly, smart, polite and fun. Mom’s students would come to play with me, and take care of me if my parents were going out.

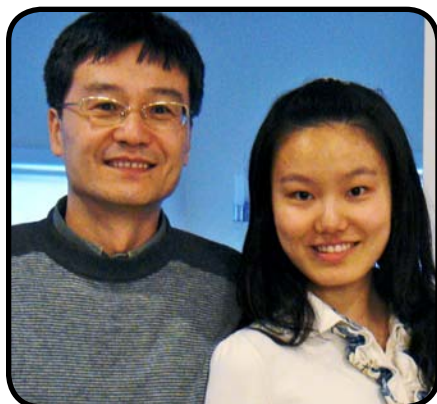
In China, teachers are more rigid. They believe that it is important to retain a certain ‘elderly dignity’ and this can keep them more distant from their students. On the contrary, Grinnell professors are very friendly, kind and caring - almost like how parents treat their children. In addition, even strangers on the street will smile and greet you. Only in Grinnell have I experienced such a peaceful life.

The significant changes that this year abroad brought to my family upon living here, and on me as a young child, are undeniable. The experience broadened my parents’ views, since they never been abroad before. As an extremely introverted and shy child, learning from such passionate teachers and among such friendly peers made me become a more open person. We only lived in Grinnell for a year and half, but everyone in my family would agree that Grinnell has become our second home!



Fifteen years ago, Frank’s parents were selected by Nanjing University as exchange professors to teach at Grinnell College! As a five year old, he was brought to live for one year in this new and very different place.

Frank’s taught Chinese, his father taught physical education and martial arts, and Frank attended kindergarten! This fall, Frank returned to Grinnell as a member of the class of 2015!



This spring, Wendy’s dad (Mr. Ren) is a visiting scholar at Grinnell, conducting research on American gun rights.



Wanjie “Wendy” Ren ‘13

“Where the hell is Grinnell?” Growing up in a metropolitan city, I thought of this small town of 9,000 as the middle of nowhere. A dot on the map. Interestingly enough, I have landed on this tiny dot twice—first as a high school freshman (with my mother, a Nanjing visiting scholar), and now as a degree seeking undergraduate. Transiting from a high school kid who was here with my family, to a College student who is here by my own choice - I have broadened my familiarity with and affection for this dot on the map!

As a teen, I was impressed by how townspeople greeted each other, how they gathered for church or volunteer service, and how engaged adults became in their children’s activities. These kind images touched me deeply, and I felt embraced by a sense of belonging. I started to see Grinnell as somewhere significant—a caring, peaceful sanctuary. At the same time, I felt isolated. I remember feeling that Grinnell was cut off from the outside world. Children examined me (as an Asian girl) with curiosity. Peers asked if I had bound my feet, if I wore Chi-Pao or rode rickshaws. I was surprised by their questions on abandoned Chinese traditions.

These misunderstandings inspired me, however, to share my culture more actively – and I returned to Iowa a few years later to attend College. This time, my perception of an isolated Grinnell changed drastically. I discovered that Grinnell embodies diversity and cherishes global exchange. I don’t feel like an alien. I am a member of a Grinnellian family - people of many races, ethnicities and nationalities. My first cell phone plan was a “family plan” of Nepali, Jamaican, Japanese and Chinese friends. I’ve had professors from France, Spain, Hong Kong and the U.S. In addition, I find the local community is a venue open to global awareness, promoting international exchange through talks and activities. Distinguished scholars offer global perspectives on hot issues, and world-famous performers bring cultural treasures. Events like the ISO Food Bazaar and the Host Family Program link the town with college students, to share culture and friendship. My Grinnell is an international collage of people and ideas. This dot on the map is no longer just ‘somewhere in the middle of nowhere.’ Quite the contrary, it is everywhere for me.

8th Annual Umoja Conference At Grinnell College: *a celebration of the midwest's black student diaspora*

-Alicia Afrah-Boateng '12, President, African and Caribbean Students Union (ACSU)

This April, Grinnell's African and Caribbean Student Union (ACSU) will host the annual Umoja Conference, welcoming some 100 students from 36 institutions, including schools in the ACM, and a number of other Iowa colleges and universities. This conference was previously hosted at Grinnell in 2006 to excellent reviews, and we look forward to sponsoring a dynamic and well-organized event.

Exciting programming headlines the 2012 Umoja Conference. Delegates will attend sessions on academics, and small group workshops on topics ranging from defining African identity, to race and class in America. Keynote speaker and documentary producer Kobinaa Aidoo will facilitate a thought-provoking screening and discussion of his film "The Neo-African Americans", which examines rapidly increasing African migration to America and the variations in diasporic black identity in the U.S. today. Throughout the conference, there will be opportunities for networking and bonding, including icebreakers, a Student Group Expose, and on-campus housing accommodations. A banquet featuring East African cuisine will be followed by a performance by "Voice of Culture," a professional Afro-modern drum and dance ensemble based in Minneapolis. Our time together will conclude with an Umoja Conference tradition, an interschool dance competition for the title of best dance performance.

The theme for the 2012 Umoja Conference is **ubuntu**, the celebrated Bantu philosophy that "I am who I am because of who we all are." Throughout the conference, we will draw on this theme to explore African and Caribbean experiences of race, immigration, and identity in the United States today. The keynote speaker, guest performers, and academic workshops will critically engage the multiple experiences of diasporic African and Caribbean identity, but will also celebrate the common ground shared by peoples of African descent in the United States.

Interested in learning more about the Umoja Conference? Contact: acsu@grinnell.edu.

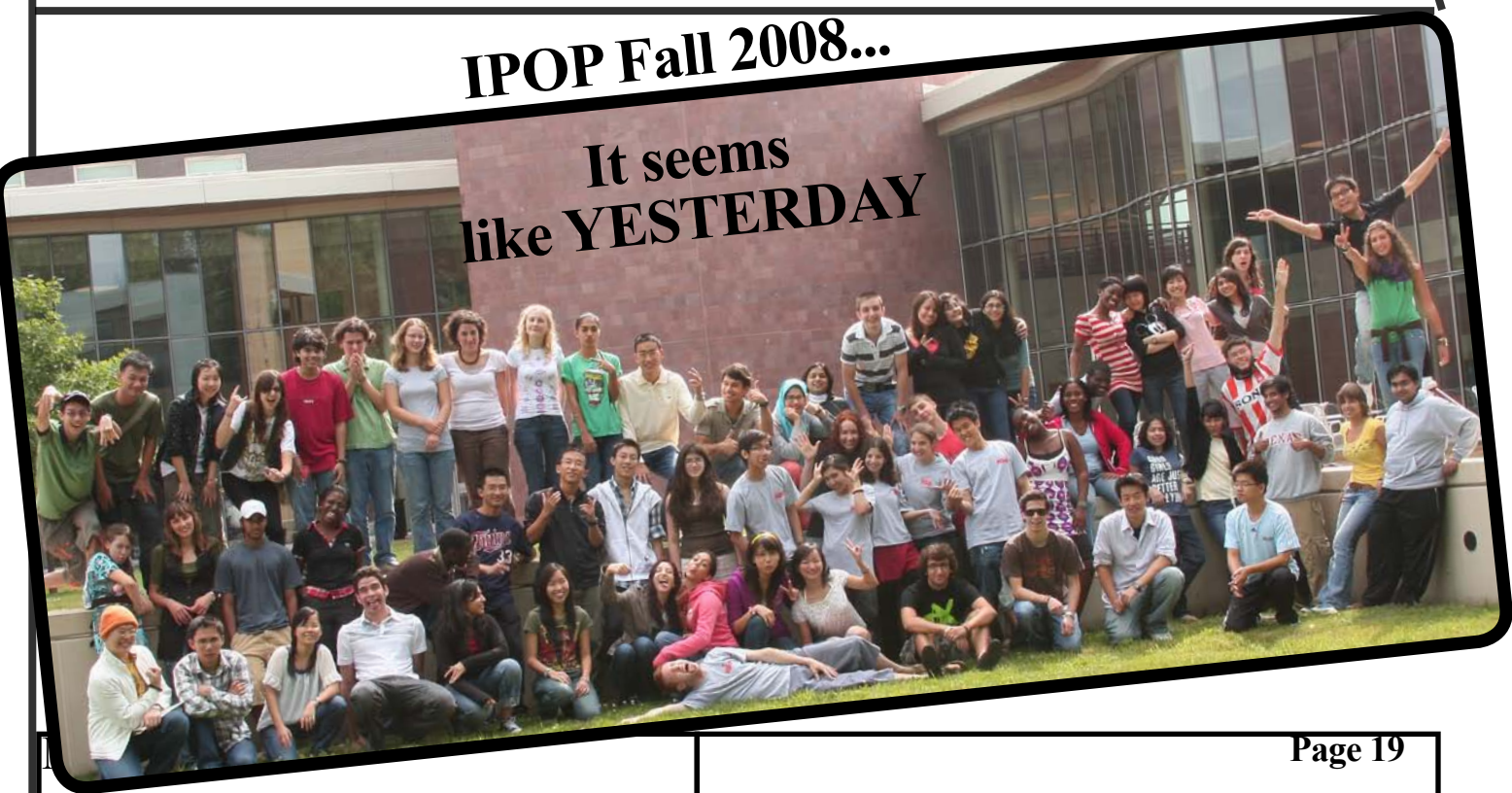


From the Swahili word for unity, the "umoja" symbol was adapted by in 2004 by the founders of the Umoja Conference to represent the bonding of the black diaspora during what has become the annual Midwestern tradition of this conference.

(graphic designed by Alicia Afrah-Boateng)

IPOP Fall 2008...

It seems like YESTERDAY



The Grinnell-New Delhi Connection

- speaking with David Harrison, Director of the Center for International Education

Grinnell College has a new faculty-exchange program with Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), in New Delhi, India. In recent years, Grinnell has hosted several faculty from JNU, including Professor Tanika Sarkar, who is currently teaching two courses in Religious Studies and History. During winter break, Professor Tim Arner, English, went to JNU to teach a course on English Renaissance Drama. Here is how he described his experience in a recent interview:

Q: What was the subject of your lectures at JNU and how many students did you teach?

A: I spoke about the legacy of the Middle Ages in Renaissance England. My first lecture was entitled “Were medieval people human?” My second was on the legend of the Trojan War in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. I had 40 students in a small classroom, so it felt somewhat crowded.

Q: How did the students respond to your lectures?

A: JNU is a graduate university with a very strong English program, so the students have an impressive knowledge of the English literary tradition. The courses they take are similar to seminars at Grinnell, with lots of attention given to literary theory (psychoanalysis, new historicism, queer studies, feminism). They asked incisive questions about the material I lectured on. Since they don’t have a medieval literature program, they were interested in why someone would study medieval literature.



Tim Arner (center) with colleagues and alum in Delhi.

Jawaharlal Nehru University
जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय

Q: Are these students all preparing to become university professors?

A: Some are, some aren’t. Like students working on Masters degrees in the U.S., some of the students at JNU are still trying to figure out what they want to do, and if they want to pursue an academic career. The Ph.D. students at JNU pursue interesting research projects. Many study contemporary Indian literature through the lens of literary theory, or they may study popular culture and Bollywood.

Q: What did you think of the JNU campus and of New Delhi?

A: JNU is beautiful -- lush, with wildlife like antelope, peacocks walking around campus. Everyone I met was very welcoming. Students were very engaged with professors, and the work they were doing. In my first week, there was a conference on campus with English Ph.D. students from India, and I was treated as part of that group, so students took me to various sites around Delhi. I think what most surprised me about Delhi was how densely populated it is. I was also surprised by the traffic and the fact that drivers don’t necessarily pay attention to the lines in the road. I loved the fact that I got to eat Indian food for breakfast.

Q: There are a lot of Grinnell students from India. Did you get a chance to see any of them while you were in New Delhi?

A: I met with two alums, Sanjay Khanna and Kaitlyn Thistlewaite. Sanjay took me around Delhi and also helped me go to Jaipur and Agra, where I saw the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal may be the most famous building in the world, but nothing compares to going through the gate and seeing it in front of you.

Q: Would you recommend that other Grinnell faculty visit JNU?

A: Yes. JNU is a major research university that is engaged worldwide. The university attracts visitors from all over, and the faculty is well traveled. They are part of a global community of scholars and intellectuals.

Off Campus Study Photos!



Oxford! It is at the famous pub The Eagle and Child, home of the Inklings writing group which included C.S. Lewis AND J.R.R. Tolkien. It was a good place to shelter from the cold and eat your favorite British dish for lunch: fish and chips, of course!

- Christopher Squier '13



The vast amounts of medicinal plants, like this Ficus Estrangulador, in the Amazon is incredible. The up close engagement with the flora really has shaped my understanding of the need to protect tropical forests like these. - Dakota Maxwell-Jones '13

Going abroad in the Fall!?
Send your great photos from
your adventures
<MOSAIC@grinnell.edu>
MOSAIC chronicles the
adventures of Grinnellians
home and abroad!



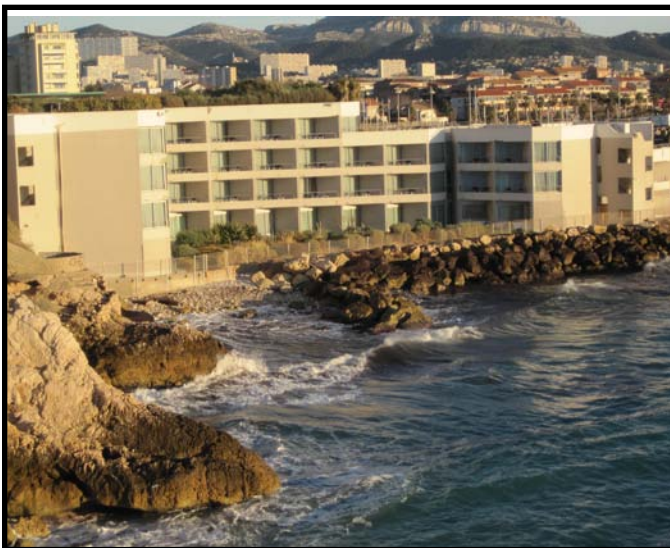
Pancho Poshtov '13 at the main London School of Economics (LSE) building in London, UK



Outburst of fury among Londoners when welfare tends towards farewell. - Ami Shrestha '13



History in mystery keeps the charm of Stonehenge alive. -Ami Shrestha '13 with Brianne Evans '13

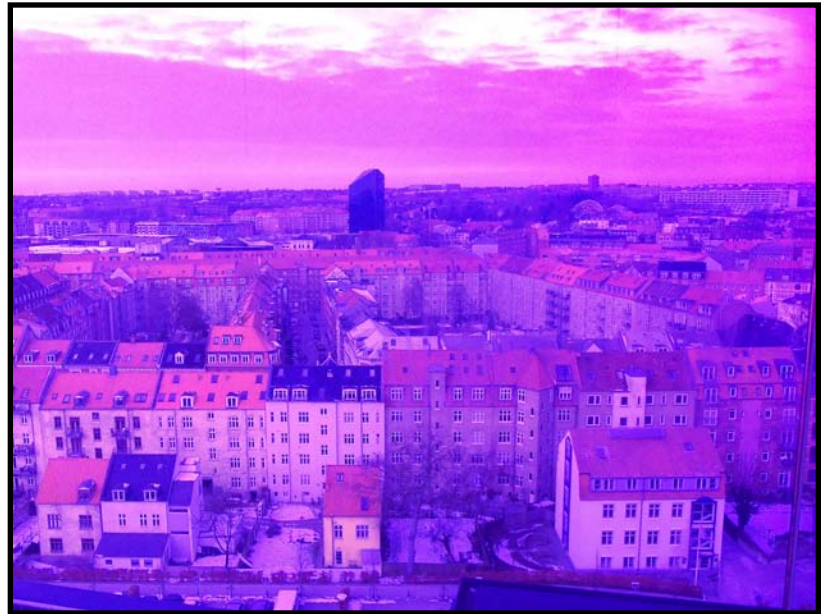


Pullman Marseille Palm Beach hotel located near the coast of the Mediterranean. - Zafreen Farishta '13



“This is me is in Paramo near the Pacific Side of Costa Rica, we had to climb up in very high elevation to get to the top, we can see both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Ocean.”

- Nancy Hernandez '13



The view from the rooftop rainbow panorama at the ARoS Aarhus Museum in Aarhus, Denmark. - Kamila Berkalieva '13

**Kamila Berkalieva '13
standing near the
statue of the Little Mermaid
in Copenhagen, Denmark.**





These are the gates to Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, one of the oldest amusement parks in the world which supposedly inspired Walt Disney to create parks of his own. Danes and American students alike are able to enjoy the rides, concert hall and more—in the summer!

- Alyce Eaton '13

**At the ruins of the feudal château at the hill-top village of Oppède le Vieux (part of the Luberon Villages)
- Zafreen Farishta '13**



My host family and I at a family birthday party. My concept of family has been dramatically redefined through living with such a great and loving Ecuadorian family. - Dakota Maxwell-Jones '13

Saturday, February 18, 2012: The Olympique de Marseille (OM) versus the Valenciennes Football Club. Supporters don the colors of OM and encourage the team with the Marseille flag. Football is much more than a sport here. It unifies the city and is an important part of the culture.
- Zafreen Farishta '13



I took this photo on my European Union class trip to Southern Denmark. The site is Dybbøl Battlefield, where the Germans defeated the Danes in 1864 (sometimes called “the Danish Gettysburg”). However, this mill managed to survive the siege and has stood as a sign of Danish national pride and strength. Even in the chilling wind, it was a striking image.
- Alyce Eaton '13



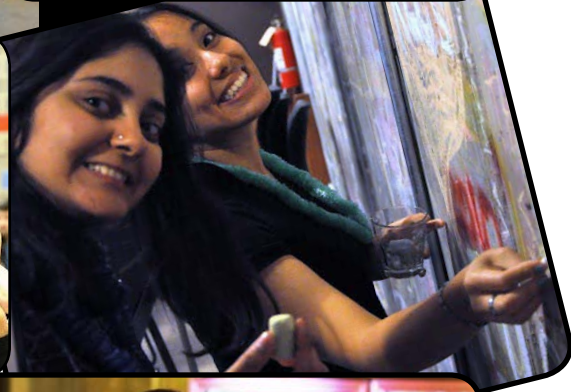
Beautiful, sunny Melbourne in February! - Brieauna Bradley '13



The Big Ben shining in glory over river Thames. - Ami Shrestha '13

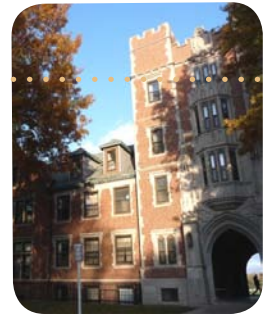
OISA / ISO

Photos from Abraham Kohrman '13



MOSAIC

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Grinnell College, JRC 3rd Floor
Grinnell, Iowa 50112



A MOSAIC of our Global Grinnell

MOSAIC art is created by arranging many small pieces of colored glass, stone or other material in a collage. Our publication, MOSAIC, celebrates the beauty of a diverse campus and world with a particular focus on the variety of global adventures, here and abroad, that are experienced by Grinnellians.

MOSAIC is a collaboration of student editors and writers, with financial support from SPARC, the Office of International Student Affairs (OISA), and the Center for International Studies (CIS). MOSAIC is distributed campus wide, and sent to community members who participate in the Host Family Program.

MOSAIC@Grinnell.edu ~ www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/oisa/mosaic