Dear Friends,

Professor David Hollenbach, SJ, the Director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice, spent the Fall 2009 semester at Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya. During this time, I served as the Center’s Interim Director.

In Kenya, David collaborated with faculty at Hekima College, teaching human rights and international justice. He also worked closely with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Eastern Africa to explore new forms of collaboration and accompanied JRS staff to visit refugee camps in Uganda and South Sudan. He remains actively engaged with JRS, advocating for meaningful action to prevent renewed violence in the region that could cause further mass displacement.

In Boston, the Center began its fifth academic year in 2009. We have continued to address the interdisciplinary challenges of human rights work, as we aim to merge the best theory with the best forms of practice. This year, many of our events have focused on immigration and human rights. You may read more about these events on pages 2-3.

The recipients of the Center’s 2009 Summer Research Grants undertook important human rights work in diverse placements around the world, from Jordan to El Salvador. Their research focused on such human rights issues as human trafficking and forced migration. More on their efforts can be found on pages 4-5.

November 2009 marked the twentieth anniversary of the murders of six Jesuits and two women at the University of Central America in El Salvador. The Center and the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights, in collaboration with several other Boston College departments and groups, hosted a major commemoration to reflect on the legacies of the martyrs and the continuing struggle for human rights in El Salvador. Page 6 has a profile of this moving and well-attended event.

Center Associate Director, Professor M. Brinton Lykes and I co-direct the Post-Deportation Human Rights Project. Page 7 has more information on our recent work in tackling the challenges of wrongful and harsh deportations from the United States. I am also very pleased to announce that Brinton and I will be hosting the Project’s first interdisciplinary conference in March 2010. The conference is designed to bring together scholars, practitioners, advocates, and community organizers to think creatively about dilemmas facing immigrants to and deportees from the United States. See page 8 for details.

The Center continues to explore key issues of human rights and international justice as we bring intellectually challenging human rights programs and events to the Boston College community. We invite you to attend our events and to visit our website, www.bc.edu/humanrights for regular updates.

Sincerely,

Daniel Kanstroom
Gerald Neuman

Professor Gerald Neuman presented at the Center’s first Conversations at Lunch event of 2009-10 on October 2, 2009. Neuman is the J. Sinclair Armstrong Professor of International, Foreign, and Comparative Law at Harvard Law School and a leading scholar on the rights of foreign nationals. He has written numerous articles on the transnational dimensions of constitutionalism, habeas corpus and executive detention.

During the luncheon, Neuman talked about his most recent work on the extraterritoriality of rights and highlighted the case Boumediene v. Bush. The case challenged the legality of a Bosnian citizen’s detention at Guantanamo Bay, as well as the constitutionality of the Military Commissions Act of 2006. He explained that “the question of who has rights under US constitution and where these people actually have rights has always been a matter of debate in the United States.” He went on to talk about other cases where the “courts have had such difficulty in regards to the extraterritoriality of US laws because of the non-universality of human rights.” Neuman elaborated that many obstacles exist in finding a universal approach to determine these rights, as the standards of application vary between the U.S. government and the local sovereign of the individuals seeking rights.

Protection under the US constitution is unfortunately a “middle road between the extension of rights and the denial of rights” to non-citizens he explained.

Susan Akram

On November 20, 2009, the Center welcomed Professor Susan Akram to speak at the next segment of its Conversations at Lunch series. Formerly, the Executive Director of the Political Asylum and Immigration Representation Project in Boston, Akram is now Clinical Professor at the Boston University School of Law. She has extensive experience as an immigration lawyer and her current research interests include immigration and refugee law, and domestic and international refugee advocacy.

Akram’s talk focused on the myths and realities of the Palestinian refugee problem, also the subject of her forthcoming book with co-writer, Terry Rempel, the Coordinator of Research and Information at Badil Resource Center for Palestinians. Two out of every five refugees in the world today are Palestinian. Akram debunked several myths surrounding the status of this large refugee population including the claim that Palestinians left voluntarily during the creation of Israel and that previous U.N. resolutions guarantee no right of return. She then contrasted these myths with the strong legal frameworks and precedents highlighting Israel’s participation in agreements requiring the implementation of durable solutions for these refugees -- including the right to return to their place of origin.

“By orienting the discourse around legal rights instead of myths,” she argued, “we can point out which rights must be met under legal standing and thereby move the discourse from the categorically impossible to very possible, with rich precedent from international agreements”
**My Prison, My Home**

The Center and the Political Science Department co-hosted a talk by Dr. Haleh Esfandiari, the Director of the Middle East Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars on September 30, 2009. Esfandiari spoke to more than 150 Boston College students and faculty about her memoir *My Prison, My Home*, based on her arrest by the Iranian security authorities in 2007.

Esfandiari was captured in Tehran in 2007 based on the Iranian Intelligence Ministry’s belief that she was in the country to start a “soft revolution.” “I only had contact with my interrogators [while in prison],” she explained “and there was only a Koran and a blanket in the cell.” Day after day in Evin Prison, Esfandiari was interrogated about her opinions on matters of US foreign policy and Middle East politics. Over time the interrogators asked her a myriad of questions, including her association with then Senator of Illinois, Mr. Barack Obama. “The moment he said, Senator Obama talked about me, it gave me spirit,” Esfandiari said explaining this gave her some evidence of what was happening in the outside world.

Despite the emotional abuse endured in solitary confinement while in prison, Esfandiari never gave up hope that she would one day be released. On December 2, 2007, five months after her initial imprisonment, Esfandiari was told she could finally leave Iran and return to the United States. Upon returning, Esfandiari has continued her work as the director of the Wilson Center’s Middle East Program at Princeton University.

**“Man on Fire” Exhibit**

The Center and the Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW) welcomed an exhibit entitled “Man on Fire,” a series of images and words honoring the legacy of Father Pedro Arrupe SJ, founder of the Jesuit Refugee Service. Hosted in the GSSW Library from September 24 through October 15, 2009, the collection offered a window into the experiences of displaced people worldwide.

Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic organization with a mission to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people. The large billboards lining the library walls featured a wide variety of photos and testimonials highlighting the organization’s incredible work, ranging from food security programs in Burundi to centers for children of war throughout the Congo.

**Demanding Dignity**

Mr. Larry Cox, the Executive Director of Amnesty International USA, delivered a lecture at Boston College on November 19, 2009 on the need of the global human rights community to protect economic, social, and cultural rights. Co-sponsored by the Center, the Political Science Department, and the Amnesty International Student Group at Boston College, the event sought to explain the “indivisibility of rights” as a concept to be preserved within the human rights movement.

Cox discussed Amnesty International’s new “Demand Dignity” campaign designed to address the human rights violations which cause poverty. The campaign aims to do so by helping to empower communities and human rights defenders to win equal access to human rights and accountability for human rights abuses from their own governments and from international actors in the state, private and multilateral sectors.
Adam Saltsman

Adam Saltsman, Ph.D. student in the Sociology Department utilized his summer research grant to explore how the lack of access to information for Iraqi forced migrants affects the mandate of the international community to provide “protection.” Saltsman along with staff of CARE International, conducted interviews and focus group discussions with the Iraqi beneficiary population in Jordan. After asking questions about issues of repatriation, resettlement, and remaining in Jordan, Saltsman’s goal was to provide recommendations to CARE staff on how they could best set up an information provision service. He concluded that access to information needs to be considered from a human rights perspective. Saltsman suggests The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) work in partnership with local and international non-governmental organizations to better link access to information with outreach and community development programs under the broad mandate of refugee protection.

Chrisann Newransky

Chrisann Newransky, Ph.D. student at the Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW) began a research project with her grant to focus on understanding the development of the widows’ human rights movement that originated from microcredit self-help groups organized by a South Indian organization called Kalangarai. With the support of GSSW professors Karen Kayser and Margaret Lombe, Newransky was able to coordinate and train a small research team and conduct structured interviews in Tamil Nadu, India with women who participate as leaders or members of Kalangarai’s micro credit self-help groups. In doing so, she sought to gauge these widows’ awareness of human rights, identify how the widows define their rights, investigate the social challenges group leaders and members face in pursuing their rights, and identify the outcomes that have resulted from yearly widows’ self-help groups conventions that have supported the overall movement. Newransky plans to conduct further research, gather documentation of the movement and hold more in-depth interviews.
Elizabeth Muller

Elizabeth Muller, undergraduate student in the College of Arts and Sciences ’11, spent six weeks in San Pedro, Paraguay volunteering with the US-based volunteer organization, Amigos de las Americas, which sends US students to live and volunteer in various Latin American countries. Elizabeth was able to document her experience in San Pedro while she led community members in building six fuel-efficient stoves (called fogones), which are vital to the health and safety of families in San Pedro. Muller also worked with the community’s women’s group and youth group to promote reforestation by planting trees and several sustainable gardens. Elizabeth’s forthcoming documentary will be centered on the process of constructing the fogones, their importance in rural, self-sustained communities, and how community members felt about their participation in the community project.

Caroline Beyer & Michael Wolf

Caroline Beyer, undergraduate student in the College of Arts & Sciences ’12, and Michael Wolf, undergraduate student in the College of Arts & Sciences ’10 worked collaboratively in both San Francisco and New York City, interviewing individuals and organizations involved in the movement against human trafficking. Beyer and Wolf interviewed heads of non-profit organizations, lawyers, documentarians, authors, students, religious leaders and police, and were able to collect on film various perspectives on the issue. Wolf plans to edit and produce the documentary through an independent study in Documentary Filmmaking. Both Beyer and Wolf hope to educate young people about the status of human trafficking in the United States and across the world through screenings of the film at Boston College and elsewhere.

Molly Kammien

Molly Kammien, undergraduate student in the College of Arts and Sciences ’10, worked as a volunteer intern at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City with the NGO representative for the Loretto Community. The Loretto Community is a group of Catholic nuns and lay co-members. Kammien worked directly with the Loretto NGO representative and her colleagues in their advocacy work, as well with the Loretto Community as a writer for the group’s newsletter. During her time in New York, Kammien observed several NGO Committee meetings, including the NGO Committee on Migration, the Working Group on Girls, the NGO Committee on Financing for Development, the Social Development Taskforce on Climate Change and Poverty, and the Conference on the Global Financial and Economic Crisis.
The Center and the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights in collaboration with the Jesuit Institute, Latin American Studies program, Lynch School of Education, Owen M. Kupferschmid Holocaust/Human Rights Project, School of Theology and Ministry, Theology Department and University Mission and Ministry presented “Living Legacies: 20th Anniversary Commemoration of the Martyrs of El Salvador” on November 4, 2009.

The event commemorated the lives and legacies of the Jesuit priests and women who were slain at the University of Central America (UCA) in El Salvador on November 16, 1989.

The evening began with the screening of “A New Person, A New Society: A Human Rights Legacy of Ignacio Martín-Baró” featuring projects of the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health & Human Rights which was created in honor of Martín-Baró, one of the Jesuit priests assassinated at the UCA. The film, produced by Boston University alumna Jenny Alexander showcased projects supported by the Fund in places like Burma, El Salvador, Guatemala and the Philippines.

Reverend J. Donald Monan, SJ, the Chancellor of Boston College gave opening remarks and introduced the evening’s panel which included Reverend Rodolfo Cardenal S.J, Sub Director Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica University of Central America, Managua and Ms. Elizabeth Lira Director of the Centro de Ética, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, in Santiago, Chile.

“I return to the full set of events that took place at that time very, very often,” said Monan, who, as president of Boston College in 1989, worked tirelessly to marshal a response to the murders, urging the United States Congress to pressure the Salvadoran government to bring the killers to justice. “It sounded an alarm to me as an educator, as a university person, as a Jesuit and as a human being,” Monan explained. “What happened was so atrocious and such a public attack on all of these things, we wanted to do something.”

Father Rodolfo Cardenal lived with those who lost their lives at the UCA and shared his reflections on the legacy of those killed and that of thousands of others martyred in El Salvador. He spoke from his own personal experiences and explained “… the UCA martyrs had a very special characteristic… they had audacity and courage to see the poor and the marginalized…. they served unconditionally.”

Cardenal talked about injustice and poverty in Latin America and the need for salvation for all of “God’s people.” Salvation he said “is only possible as it is made flesh in history... it makes no sense to speak of freedom and democracy when basic needs are not met.”

Ms. Elizabeth Lira, a Professor of Psychology has provided training for psychologists treating victims of human rights violations in Chile and other countries. In her response to Cardenal’s speech she highlighted the ethical ad human rights challenges facing those who accompany survivors of war and state-violence, a legacy of the martyrs of El Salvador. She spoke on the issue of poverty and women in Latin America, specifically drawing upon the experience of the two women who worked with the Jesuits at the UCA. “The two women,” said Lira, “represent the oppression of women in El Salvador generally...they felt safe [living with the Jesuits] but like other Salvadoran women, they were also made victims.”
The Post-Deportation Human Rights Project (PDHRP) continues its work with and for individuals and communities affected by US deportation laws. Most recently, in November 2009, together with community partners Centro Presente, English for Action, and Organización Maya K’iche’, the PDHRP hosted a know-your-rights workshop in Lynn, Massachusetts, addressing the rights of undocumented immigrants when facing arrest by immigration authorities.

The workshop featured dramatizations by members of Centro Presente and English for Action, and incorporated Theater of the Oppressed techniques. Members of the PDHRP from Boston College, Centro Presente, and English for Action learned these techniques together in a recent workshop held at Wheelock College by Julian Boal, and they are further developing these skills to engage community members more deeply in upcoming participatory know-your-rights workshops.

Last month the PDHRP also made available online a recently revised version of its Practice Advisory on Post-Departure Motions to Reopen and Reconsider, a guide for attorneys. The Practice Advisory is accessible on the Center’s website at: http://www.bc.edu/centers/humanrights/projects/deportation.html. A guide on post-deportation concerns for deportees and their families is forthcoming.

PDHRP legal staff members also completed a U visa application on behalf of a recent deportee who was a victim of crime in the United States; it is the second such non-immigrant visa application that PDHRP attorneys have completed for a client who was previously removed.

A fuller discussion of the PDHRP’s work for the 2008-2009 year is available in the recently-released Annual Report available in both English and Spanish on the Center website at http://www.bc.edu/centers/humanrights/news.html.
The Center’s Post Deportation Human Rights Project invites you to the opening session of the interdisciplinary working conference on Deportation, Migration, and Human Rights Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice. The conference will bring together scholars, practitioners, advocates, and community organizers to think creatively about dilemmas facing immigrants to and deportees from the United States.

Keynote Addresses

Mr. Ali Noorani

Mr. Ali Noorani is the Executive Director of the National Immigration Forum, based in Washington D.C. The Forum is one of the nation’s premier pro-immigrant advocacy and policy organizations. Previously, Noorani led the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

Dr. Dora Schriro

Dr. Dora B. Schriro is Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction. Schriro served as Director of the Office of Detention Policy and Planning for the Department of Homeland Security, where she led an overhaul of the nation’s immigration detention system.