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Faculty File

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From Bosnia to Burma

Human rights series engages students and faculty

By Stephen Collins '74

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Though the keynote talk in the Oak Fellowship Presentations on Human Rights had to be cancelled, the fall series of lunchtime talks was heralded as a great success. Ten programs were scheduled, all discussing human rights issues in various parts of the world.

The idea to dedicate the College's annual Social Sciences and Humanities Colloquium Series this semester to discussions of human rights was conceived by Julie de Sherbinin, assistant professor of Russian and colloquium organizer, and Ken Rodman, chair of the Government Department and director of the Oak Institute for the Study of International Human Rights.

They reasoned that the traditional colloquium series would be a good forum for the first Oak Human Rights Fellow, journalist Zafaryab Ahmed, to talk to faculty members about his work in Pakistan. Unfortunately Ahmed's October 30 talk, "Human Rights in Pakistan," had to be cancelled because he is still unable to leave his country (see From the Hill). But the rest of the schedule—seven talks by Colby faculty and two by visiting lecturers—not only advanced awareness of human rights, the talks attracted bigger than normal crowds and expanded the audience beyond faculty members to include students and community members.

The Social Science and Humanities Colloquium series was begun about 10 years ago by Associate Professor of History James Webb to give professors oppor-

tunities to share their research interests with colleagues. de Sherbinin said that, while she has worked for human rights with Amnesty International for about 20 years and has served as advisor of Colby's Amnesty group since arriving on campus in 1993, initially she doubted that there was enough research about human rights going on at Colby to sustain the idea through an entire semester of weekly lunches.

When she started asking colleagues, however, many were enthusiastic. Jeffery Anderson, an anthropologist, got the series off to a strong start in September talking about one of his primary areas of interest—American Indian human rights issues. Anderson will again teach Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples as a Jan Plan course this year. Rodman, an expert on international sanctions, discussed non-governmental sanctions against South Africa, Burma and Nigeria in a talk titled "Think Globally, Punish Locally."

Historian Raffael Scheck gave a historical perspective on human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina. de Sherbinin said that although Bosnia-Herzegovina is outside of Scheck's primary interests, he decided that there was insufficient knowledge of the circumstances and on his own initiative did a superb job researching and explaining the situation.

Other programs on the schedule included sociologist Mary Beth Mills on migrant youth and labor rights in Thailand, Jennifer Yoder (government) comparing

transitional justice in post-communist Germany and post-apartheid South Africa, Ariel Armony (government) on documenting human rights violations in Argentina and economist Jan Hogendorn on the abolition of slavery in Africa.

Rounding out the semester, Cindy Mahmood of the University of Maine talked about violence in the Punjab, and Steve Angle of Wesleyan University talked about rights in China.



Julie de Sherbinin

"It turned into a very strong series," de Sherbinin said.

Perhaps more important, the success of the unified colloquia showed how the Oak Foundation endowment, which also funds the Oak fellowship and several scholarships for victims of human rights abuses, already is helping to move human rights to center stage at Colby.

The College also has a Colby-Oak Foundation international scholarship program that has a special focus on students who have or whose families have suffered political oppression including political torture. ♦

Seven Decades of Devotion

Professor Ralph S. "Roney" Williams '35 died May 4, 1998, in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, after nearly seven decades of devotion and service to Colby as student, teacher, administrator and trustee. He was 85.

Williams returned to the College in 1947 after earning a master's degree in business administration at New York University, serving as a lieutenant commander in the Navy during World War II and teaching for a year at Boothbay Harbor High School.

In the first years he was an instructor in business administration, administrative assistant to President J. Seelye Bixler, director of Roberts Union and director of adult education and summer programs. In 1959 he was appointed administrative vice president of the College, and in 1960 he became secretary of the corporation and Herbert Wadsworth Professor of Administrative Science. On his retirement in 1973, following a semester as acting president of the College while President Robert E.L. Strider was on leave, he was awarded the degree of doctor of humane letters.

Williams continued his support of Colby through alumni activities, committee appointments and financial contributions and as a member of the Board of Trustees, where he helped guide Colby's investments and build the College's fiscal strength. In 1972 he received a Colby Brick for his loyalty and dedication to the College, and in 1985 the former Kappa Delta Rho fraternity house was renamed in his honor.

Born in New York City, where he attended public schools, he became a trustee of eight Maine corporations and was elected to various boards throughout his lifetime, including the Maine State Criminal Justice Academy, YMCA and Good Will-Hinckley School, where he had prepared to enter the College. Sixty years later he established a scholarship fund at Colby for Good Will students.

His wife of 47 years, Barbara Howard Williams, died previously. He is survived by his second wife, Barbara Nowack Williams, his daughters, Marinel and Jane, seven grandchildren, including Susan Carbone '90 and Robert Carbone '93, and two great-grandchildren. ♦



Ralph S. Williams '35

pundits & plaudits

Dignity and Indignity

Colby faculty were all over the news in the wake of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. **G. Calvin Mackenzie** (government) was quoted in several media outlets on the implications of special prosecutor Kenneth Starr's investigation of the president. "No matter what happens as far as impeachment goes, [Clinton] will forever be remembered as this very tragi-comic figure: the 'sex-scandal president,'" Mackenzie told *The Boston Sunday Herald*.

Jane Moss (women's studies and French), in an article in *The Boston Globe* that was reprinted nationally, said that first lady Hillary Clinton was enduring the humiliation of the Lewinsky scandal with grace and dignity. "She has to be in great pain to have the entire universe know her husband was fooling around with a twenty-one-year-old in the White House, right under her nose. You have to admire Hillary's grace in these extraordinary times," Moss said.

Out of Touch with Reality

In a feature story about the drinking culture on American college campuses, **William Klein** (psychology) told the *Bangor Daily News* that binge drinking at Colby is less widespread than believed.

Klein, who conducted a survey of Colby students in 1997 and again early in 1998, found that students overestimated the amount their peers drink. Students reported drinking about five times a month but guessed that their fellow students were drinking nine times a month. This discrepancy may help explain the peer pressure associated with drinking, Klein said. "There are an alarming number of students that drink too much, but not all do," he told the newspaper.

"There are a small number that drink to excess, but I don't think there's a large number of students who go out with the intention of drinking to excess," Klein said.

Attempting to counter the misconceptions about drinking, Klein has embarked on a project that involves paying students \$1 if they can accurately answer questions about alcohol consumption at Colby, the newspaper reported.

Watch for Future Developments

This spring term, the Art Department will offer Colby's first semester-long course in fine art photography. Art 198, Photography I: An Introduction to Basic Concepts, Techniques and Materials of Photography is the first level in what art faculty expect to expand into a fully rounded component of the studio art curriculum.

An advanced course will be introduced next fall, and over time students will be able to take a number of courses in photography, says Michael Marlais, Art Department chair.

"We've been thinking about this for years; it's something our

students have wanted for quite a while," Marlais said. "At our senior exit interviews students often say they wish we had photography."

Deborah Randall, a first-year assistant professor of art, will teach the photography courses. "An art department could expand several ways and photography seemed like a natural for us because the interest already is there [among students]," she said.

There is no dedicated space for the program yet, Marlais says, so students temporarily will share rooms used by the Photography Club in Roberts Union and two darkrooms that will be renovated in Bixler.