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## Drawn to Africa

In anthropology, Katy Lindquist '14 finds her footing.

*Katy Lindquist '14 is a Presidential Scholar from Woodland Park, Colo., who majored in anthropology and won the award for outstanding performance in anthropology and the Oak Human Rights Champion prize. Her Colby career included two Jan Plans in southern India with Oak Fellow Fatima Burnad, a summer in Tanzania helping a community organization build a secondary school, another summer in Ethiopia working for a community development organization, and a semester abroad studying post-genocide reconstruction and peace building in Rwanda. She sat down for a Q&A before graduation in May.*

**Coming from a small town in Colorado, did you arrive at Colby interested in the developing world or discover that passion here?**

Most of what I grew up learning about the world was through the church community and missions trips. ... When I graduated I spent a month that summer in northern Uganda with a fair trade organization I had volunteered with for years, working with a small community that had been displaced in the civil war. I get there and I realize I know nothing about the culture, nothing about the people, have nothing to offer. There's a very uncomfortable month where I felt like I was just on tour of these people's stories and really intruding on something I didn't belong in. That's the sort of sentiment I came into Colby with.

**You said you were drawn to the study of anthropology after your first course with Bartlett Professor of Anthropology Catherine Besteman. Why?**

Anthropology ... questions the dominant discourses and makes sense of power relations and how they affect people at local levels. ... It's also a really reflexive discipline that's constantly questioning the presence of the researcher, the presence of the anthropologist, the type of knowledge we produce ... as dominantly American



Katy Lindquist '14



or Western researchers going into developing countries and trying to tell a story about how other people live lives. There's a lot of complicated and problematic power relations in that.

**You went to Tanzania the summer after your sophomore year. How was it returning to Africa after having studied anthropology and after having worked with Oak Fellow Fatima Burnad in India?**

I made sure before I left I was bringing tangible skills that would benefit the organization and the community. My experience with Fatima gave me some guidance for setting up a small microfinance program and connecting it with the larger funders in the United States. I also helped oversee the construction of the secondary school that the organization [Project Wezesha] was building, which meant a lot of different interviews with regional leaders and local leaders and sorting through some village politics that were preventing the school from being built. ... Then I set up a scholarship application process and tried to institutionalize it, which meant walking for hours to these villages, setting up meetings with local village leaders, working with kids side by side to fill out these applications. And my background in anthropology helped me do that. It teaches you how to get your bearings, how to identify people who will help you, who to trust.

*"So many of our students study abroad, but the intentionality in the way Katy went about it is impressive. ... She's a role model." Professor of Anthropology Mary Beth Mills*

**You were the founder of the campus chapter of STAND, a student-led movement to end and prevent mass atrocities and genocide. And then you studied in Rwanda. How did that go?**

Rwanda is a very hard place to be. I was on a program that was learning about post-genocide restoration and peace building, but really what I felt I was studying, what I'm still studying, is a country that's about to descend into another round of violence. ... That's what I wrote my senior thesis on. It was a really hard place to be because you can feel that something's about to happen.

**Besides the background in anthropology that's become a framework for your work and research, what else did you get at Colby?**

Both of my trips to India, Tanzania. I spent the past summer in Ethiopia. ... All of these internships and research experiences abroad were funded by Colby. That's something that I think is unique to this school. One of my biggest pieces of advice to younger students is take advantage of the resources.

**And what are your plans as you get ready to graduate?**

I'm in the running for a number of jobs in East Africa, not specifically in Rwanda. I imagine in a few years I'll be in grad school for anthropology and that I'll continue my work in Rwanda.

**So how do your parents feel about your adventurous interests and your work in the developing world?**

They really resisted at first. I raised all that money to go to Uganda that first time on my own, against their wishes. And then they came around to it. They were incredibly supportive once they realized that this was what I was passionate about and what I wanted to do. They supported me, they read all of my work. I know they sit up every night when I'm away and worry about me, but they trust me. It's cool. I think I brought a new world into their world in Woodland Park.