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From the Hill

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THE LIVES BEHIND THE PORTRAITS
PHOTOMOSAIC ILLUSTRATES THE COMPLEX AND COMPELLING STORIES OF AIDS VICTIMS IN MALAWI

RUTH JACOBS  STORY

Children show off their white teeth and cherubic cheeks. Mothers kiss and cradle their infants. Men pose in suit jackets with an air of confidence. A boy stares into the camera with a pronounced frown. These are the faces of AIDS in Malawi, but, thanks to Ken Wong ’83, they are more than that.

An East Asian studies major who delved into photography after Colby, Wong believes that these photos do not speak for themselves. As a documentary photographer, Wong had been covering the effects of AIDS in Boston when Harvard Medical School asked him to do something similar in southern Africa. He knew he needed more than a camera. “In the Nineties there were a lot of people taking photographs of people with HIV/AIDS, and it was all, you know, the really horribly skinny. And it was just a picture,” he said. “If there was a story about them, it was about how horrible their life is with HIV. I wanted to do more than that.”

Wong finished the project for Harvard but didn’t stop there. He founded the Face-to-Face AIDS Project, a nonprofit that aims to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in Malawi and Cambodia through two towering walls of portraits showing people affected by the disease. Each panel is flanked by a poster with a couple of sentences about each subject—the result of hours of interviews. The Face-to-Face AIDS Photomosaics came to Colby in March not because Wong is an alum but because of James Goldring ’09.

A mutual friend brought Wong and Goldring together, and during the summer of 2006 Goldring served part-time as Wong’s assistant in Malawi. Goldring returned to Colby with a clarity of purpose: to raise money for an orphan care organization and to raise awareness on his campus. “It is big,” he said. “But we’re doing it.”

In Malawi, Wong, often with Goldring, spent hours with each person, listening. Listening as Joyce Chingwalu, 52, said that she tries to eat plenty of soybeans and milk to remain healthy. When Chrissy Jamu, 23, explained her strict policy with the two teenage orphans she cares for (they must do well on their exams). When Patrick Mwakilama, 17, said that he took up carpentry because he couldn’t afford to attend school and support his mother and seven brothers.

Through that experience Goldring discovered what he could do to help. Back at Colby he set out to follow the community-based approach—supporting community organizations already helping people in Malawi. “I think it’s innovative,” he said. “I think only now, really, are the big organizations realizing that there’s this network of community-based organizations [CBOs] that have sprouted up all over sub-Saharan Africa and then elsewhere in the world.”

One such CBO is the Luzi Orphan Care Organization, which, among other things, provides home-based care to people affected by HIV/AIDS. Goldring set up his own organization, LuziCare, to raise money for the existing Malawian organization. To date LuziCare has funneled $6,000 to the Malawi-based organization, which allowed it to more than triple the number of people receiving aid. Goldring and fellow students have raised an additional $3,000 since October, with more to come.

“The reason for the growth of the existing home-based care program is LuziCare,” Goldring said, “because of those capital inputs, because of the ambulance bicycles, because they can get around more easily.” Much of the money, he says, came from Colby students and their parents through fundraisers on campus.

Two years into the project, Goldring sought to bring the photomosaics to Colby. Having put so much into, and gained so much from, the photomosaics project, Goldring wanted his classmates to see it. “I see each portrait and I remember the interview. I remember the several hours we spent with that person, and I know the back story really well,” he said. “It’s sort of like I’m sharing something very important to me, very personal to me, with the rest of Colby. And to see … their response, to see them interested—not just interested but sort of enthralled—is really, really rewarding.”

After installing the photomosaics in the Diamond Building, Wong spoke to Colby students about his work. He showed photos and videos of the people in Malawi. He told stories. About people who died of AIDS because, he believes, they gave up hope. About a girl who was so close to death that she couldn’t speak, but who now loves to sing. And he talked to students about going abroad. “Don’t go abroad convinced that you’re going there to help them,” he said. “You have to be really careful of placing your Western attitudes on their culture. The best way to go is just to go and learn.”

Americans can help, Wong said, through supporting local organizations and by allowing the people in these communities to take responsibility and control.

He urged students who go abroad to avoid making promises they can’t keep, and he said that too many in Africa have been given false hope by people who never return. He encouraged students to learn as much as they can about people, their culture, and their history—really to get to know people. “It really is about the individual,” he said. “It’s about their lives, it’s about them connecting with you.”

Goldring said underclassmen plan to take over LuziCare after he graduates. “We’re working very hard this semester to create the organizational structure such that it will be able to continue next year.”

Just as Wong shared his passion with Goldring who, in turn, inspired a movement at Colby, Goldring has passed his passion on.

Hear Ken Wong ’83 speak on the need to confront the AIDS pandemic. www.colby.edu/mag, keyword: luzicare

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FACE-TO-FACE AIDS PROJECT (LEFT) AND BETH COLE ’09 (RIGHT)

Ken Wong ’83, left, and James Goldring ’09. Goldring worked with Wong in Malawi on a project that became the photomosaic of AIDS victims in background.

www.colby.edu/mag, keyword: luzicare
Home Economics

DEBRA BARBEZAT’S STUDENTS TURN TO THEIR OWN FAMILY HISTORIES TO PUT FACES ON GENDER-BASED INEQUITIES IN LABOR MARKETS

STEPHEN COLLINS ’74 STORY

Since her first year at Colby, 1992, Mitchell Family Professor of Economics Debra Barbezat has lectured about gender-based inequities in the labor market in Econ 254.

Each year she tells her students, “Gender influences your opportunity.”

“They don’t believe it,” she said. “Men or women.”

Though she hasn’t given up on the time-honored, stand-and-deliver lecture, Barbezat recently has employed a powerful new hook. For the past three years the biggest class assignment—30 percent of the grade in The Economics of Women, Men, and Work—is a project requiring students to research their own families to explore how gender affected the labor-market experiences of the students’ parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, or even great-grandparents. The semester ends with presentations to the whole class.

“Rather than listen to me say it—and not really believe it—they do it through their own investigation,” Barbezat said.

Sure, students read about trends and study statistics that show how women are penalized as they bounce in and out of the labor market to rear children and manage domestic duties. How men, meanwhile, are groomed for executive positions with professional development and company-supported training. How trailing spouses who follow a partner’s career moves aren’t as likely to advance in their professions or achieve their pay potential.

“It is kind of eye opening when you look at your own family and look at other people’s families,” said Mike Policinski ’10, an economics major from Minnesota. “It makes it more real.”

“Ninety percent of the class did fit the gender trends we were talking about,” Policinski estimated. “Everyone kind of fit into it—their parents and their grandparents.”

Meghan Saccone ’10, from Andover, Mass., said the project was a departure from her other work in economics, “where you study the models and you find the answers.”

In Barbezat’s class, Saccone said, “we looked at things like divorce and childbirth and explained those in terms of the economics we know. We did the economics of deciding to get married and the multiple reasons why you might do that.”

She learned that her great-grandmother, a second-grade teacher in New Hampshire, “upon entering wedlock, was forced into compulsory retirement as was mandated by state law at the time.”

Her grandmother, also a teacher, wanted to be a CIA interpreter. “That was shocking. ... It’s part of her I never knew about,” she said. But her grandmother didn’t express any regret about giving up that ambition to return to New Hampshire in order to marry.

Saccone also wrote about her aunt, who earned a master’s in French literature and then was the primary breadwinner and did most household tasks while her husband worked long hours for little pay to finish his medical internship and residency. Upon becoming a doctor, he relocated the family from Long Island to New Hampshire, and the aunt took a “significant wage cut” in the transition.

Saccone wrote that her aunt’s working life illustrates many characteristics of women in the workplace. “She had two significant periods of absence from the market, which corresponded
perfectly with the birth of her oldest and youngest children. Most discontinuous workers, like Sharon [her aunt], experience significant decreases in earning potential as a result of their time off.

The notion that a spouse’s higher education—a form of human capital—can be figured into divorce settlements interested several students. If you work to put your spouse through law school or medical school, say, a judge may award part of your spouse’s earning potential to you in a divorce decree. “I never considered that someone could try to claim that they should have part of your educational attainment in a monetary way,” Saccone said. “It makes you think.”

Brooke Wanlass ’11 learned from her great aunt’s experience about the importance of human capital—in that case earning a master’s degree, which “enabled her to do what she wanted.” The story reinforced Wanlass’s interest in going on to law school. “Sometimes it’s hard to imagine going to graduate school when you’re working so hard here. It’s like, ‘Oh, I just want to be done!’ But I think it will pay off, and doing this project showed me it is a good investment.”

Amy Snickenberger ’10 wrote about her great-grandparents’ marriage: “Laurens and Ethel met and married after she attended college. The D factor scale indicates that the opportunity cost for their marriage was minimal. Their parents introduced them because they were in similar social groups, which made their courtship easy and convenient. ... The fact that Laurens already had a stable job was an economic incentive for Ethel to marry him.”

While some American students balked at applying the terminology of the so-called dismal science to love and marriage, Barbezat noted that students from South Asia and Africa, where arranged marriages are common, said such calculus came as no surprise.

Barbezat stressed the value of international perspectives, noting that more than 20 countries were represented in the class, between international students and children of immigrants.

Tubotu Musumai ’09J, from Zambia, wrote about gender discrimination in her grandparents’ generation, which extended to her grandmother, the “senior wife” in a bigamist marriage, being banished from her grandfather’s land after his death.

Soule Sow ’09, from Senegal, wrote about his grandparents, who owned and traded in cows in an era when ethnicity acted as a caste system that defined job prospects in Senegal. A generation later his aunt and uncle moved to France in search of better job opportunities. When the uncle moved back to Senegal, the aunt stayed in France. Though she had sacrificed her own education so he could attend graduate school and her human capital was limited, Western Europe offered job opportunities that Africa did not.

Barbezat didn’t invent the family history; it’s a project that’s been passed around among economists who teach gender economics courses, she said. And it’s proven as popular with students’ families as with the students themselves. “They loved it,” said Brooke Wanlass of the interview with her great aunt and great uncle. “They’d go on and on.”

And what did students find? Some discovered exceptional women and men who challenged “occupational gender segregation” or broke gender barriers in the workplace. But the many case studies followed statistical trends. Si Rioux ’10, from Cape Elizabeth, Maine, concluded: “With this evidence, it is clear that although economic and social circumstances have improved for many women, the United States still has a long way to go to eliminate gender bias in the labor market.”

“It is amazing,” wrote Amy Snickenberger, “that as our country moves forward to combat gender discriminations in the workforce that gender discrepancies still exist within many jobs.”
The Storybook Life of Colby Jack

FROM MAYFLOWER HILL TO THE WORLD SERIES, JACK COOMBS LED THE LIFE OF “A CLEAN, HONEST, TRUE-BLUE ATHLETE”

GERRY BOYLE ’78 REVIEW

The movie pitch: Turn of the century (the 20th). The son of a small-town blacksmith is spotted on the baseball fields of Kennebunk, Maine. Recruited by Colby College, he stars in three sports and earns his tuition money (pre-NCAA rules) playing summer baseball for $25 a week. Planning to go to graduate school (MIT) in chemistry, he is recruited again, this time by Connie Mack, legendary manager of the Philadelphia Athletics. The strapping Mainer signs for the then-astounding sum of $2,400 and, immediately upon graduation from Colby, packs his glove and boards a train for Philly. Vaulting to stardom, he pitches his team to back-to-back world championships.

That’s the 30-second version of the story of Colby Jack Coombs (Class of 1906), which baseball writer John Tierney meticulously recounts in Jack Coombs: A Life In Baseball (McFarland, 2008). It’s a remarkable tale, from Coombs’smeteoric rise, to his battles to overcome career-threatening injuries and illness, to his adherence to a strict code of clean living, on and off the field. Said Coombs, speaking at the dedication of Coombs Field at Colby in 1951, “I hope that all young men who play upon it will be inspired to live the lives of clean, honest, true-blue athletes.”

No steroid scandal here. In fact, Tierney’s book can be enjoyed both for its recounting of Coombs’s remarkable career and for its depiction of professional baseball long before nine-figure contracts and A-Rod’s dirty laundry.

Just a year out of Colby, in 1907, Coombs already was one of the top pitchers in baseball. He had beaten Boston’s Cy Young (yes, the Cy Young) and was building a reputation as a gutsy gamer with nasty stuff. “He works like an old-timer,” reported The Washington Post, “and incidentally, has a lot of speed and excellent curves.”

An arm injury derailed that season, but Coombs was back in 1908. That caught the attention of none other than sports columnist Ring Lardner, then with the Chicago Tribune. “For weeks he has pitched every third day at least, and for a while he was used every other day,” Lardner reported. “In the twelfth and thirteenth rounds yesterday he appeared to weaken.”

Coombs won the game, and Lardner would go on to describe his pitching as “one of the wonders of the land.”

This was before pitchers became specialists, taking the mound for an inning or even a single batter. In Coombs’s day, a starting pitcher was his own closer. As Tierney tells it, “With darkness beginning to settle in during the sixteenth inning, [Coombs] ended his performance with a flourish, striking out the last three Chicago hitters.”

Sixteen innings, 18 strikeouts, three hits. For Coombs, another day at the office.

He would go on to help the A’s win the World Series in 1910 and 1911, his salary climbing to $5,000. The 1911 championship earned Coombs a bonus of more than $3,600. He was a celebrity and formed a vaudeville act with two teammates. A former Colby thespian, Coombs was the star.

In the spring of 1913, Coombs contracted typhoid fever, the infection settling in his lower spine. He spent months in a body cast and missed two seasons. When he returned to baseball in 1915, with the Brooklyn Robins, he was more crafty than overpowering and, while successful, couldn’t bring home another World Series championship.

But, as Tierney recounts, Coombs was stoical about the downturn in his career, seeing athletics as being as much about character as success. When the Black Sox game-rigging scandal broke in 1920, Tierney writes, it was suggested that “somebody like Jack Coombs” be appointed to a board to police the sport.

Coombs went on to coach college baseball, settling at Duke University after a stop at Williams College. He wrote a landmark baseball textbook, a 300-page scientific examination of the game. Coombs and his wife, Mary, had no children, and his players and students came to be his family, Tierney writes. Perhaps because of his illness-shortened career, Coombs was never elected to the Hall of Fame.

A baseball writer and historian, Tierney doesn’t overdramatize his subject. In the end, the facts, some of which were gleaned from Miller Library’s Special Collections, speak for themselves. It seems a fitting tone, just the way Coombs would have told the story himself. “There is much in life if a man lives and does all things above-board,” Coombs said in a 1943 interview with the Sporting News. “I hope I have lived that kind of life at all times.” Write that into the script.
In Woman Who Speaks Tree, Tatelbaum offers a “memoir with a mission,” from which all of us—even non-tree-huggers—can learn, like her, to “respect nature for the lessons it offers on how to live.”

Tatelbaum’s playful but thoughtful chapters highlight important phases of her life: homesteading, parenting, teaching, aiding aging parents. As the chapters unfold we witness Tatelbaum’s ability to decipher nature’s wisdom in order to navigate a world riddled with dualities. “Where’s the boundary between use and abuse?” Tatelbaum asks early on. Treading gently on the earth gets complicated when vexing decisions arise, like whether to cut down a tree if it’s blocking your solar panels. “Life choices are not as simple as weeding in the garden, where it’s clear what goes, what stays.”

Can “speaking tree” help us accept the gray areas?

Yet speaking tree is no walk in the park. The language of trees is “gesture, cyclical, and inclusive,” a language that encourages flexibility, grace, and pride, Tatelbaum writes. She demonstrates this most powerfully in her final chapter, “The College and the Woods,” which recounts her 2005 effort to save two beech trees threatened by the expansion of Cotter Union.

Uncertain how, or if, to challenge the architectural design, she received advice from an old maple near Runnals, she writes. “Leaf,” the tree suggested—but leaving the College would accomplish nothing. “Bark,” it offered, and Tatelbaum found her voice. “Branch,” it said. Then “stump.”

Heeding the tree’s advice, Tatelbaum formed Friends of the Beeches. Petitions were passed; ultimately, one tree was cut down. An angry Tatelbaum eventually softened—when she adopted tree thinking: A tree would stand with dignity and accept its fate.

Tatelbaum writes that trees have taught her to “accept and defend. Love, and be furious if that’s what gets you moving.” After all, “Maybe you can only change people by accepting who they are. And you become changed in the process.”

Woman Who Speaks Tree offers hope and inspiration in a time of environmental crisis. We would be wise to follow Tatelbaum’s example. “Being green,” she suggests, “isn’t just about saving the environment, but actually learning from it.” —Laura Meader
Men’s basketball coach Dick Whitmore joined an elite club Jan. 17. With the coach’s 600th career victory on the line and Colby’s biggest rival in the house, the Mules played gritty defense down the stretch for a convincing 65-55 win, making Whitmore just the seventh basketball coach in NCAA Div. III history to record 600 wins.

Adding to the pressure: Bowdoin is Whitmore’s alma mater, and the Polar Bears won the teams’ season opener in the fall.

Whitmore is one of just 51 men’s coaches in the history of all NCAA basketball divisions to reach the 600 milestone. After the buzzer, as alumni players going all the way back to his first Colby season 38 years ago congratulated the smiling coach, Whitmore was eager to share the glory. “It’s 600 wins by 600 players,” he said. “It’s the players who are responsible for the wins. I’m just glad to be here.”

The team continued to play well, beating Amherst late in the season and, as fourth seed, earned home court for the NESCAC quarterfinal Feb. 21, which turned out to be an upset by fifth-seeded Bowdoin. That put Whitmore’s record as a college coach at 607-321, an enviable 65-percent win rate.

Whitmore graduated from Bowdoin in 1965 with a degree in classics and a 1000-plus-points basketball career. He then followed his father, who had won state championships in Maine and Massachusetts, into high school coaching.

After he was hired as Colby’s varsity coach, in 1970 by athletic director John Winkin, Whitmore’s team beat the University of Maine in the State of Maine series the subsequent year with a buzzer-beater. “I’ll never forget that shot, because I tore up my knee,” Whitmore said. “I was jumping up in the air and came down wrong. I had to have the knee operated on.”

For 38 years Whitmore has sat side by side with Waterville basketball legend John “Swisher” Mitchell, who’s been assistant coach since before Whitmore arrived. Both are in the New England Basketball Hall of Fame.

For Whitmore Colby basketball is a family affair. His parents attended more than 500 of his games, he calls his wife, Mary Kay, the “rock of the family and my inspiration,” and the couple has four children. Kevin ’91 scored 1,357 points playing for his father for three years and earning All-America honors in 1991—with players from several decades, he was on hand for number 600.
Lucy Garrec ‘12 shows precedent-setting form. Garrec won the 15K at the NCAA Div. I Bates Carnival, making her the first Colby Nordic skier to win such an event.

One of the reasons Lucy Garrec ‘12 chose Colby was the hope that she might help build the women’s Nordic ski team into a serious contender.

It took her exactly one weekend of competition to raise expectations. In her very first college race, the 5K classical race at the Bates Carnival in January, Garrec came in third among 92 entrants—an extraordinary accomplishment for a rookie in an event that’s not her strongest.

That gave her confidence, and the next day she was first among 82 skiers in the 15K freestyle. It was the first time a Colby Nordic skier ever won a race at an NCAA Div. I carnival, and it contributed to a third-place team finish in the event—particularly sweet, Garrec said, because that put the team ahead of perennial powerhouse Middlebury.

Garrec was a top recruit, said Nordic ski team coach Tracey Cote, but she surprised everyone by beating opponents she finished behind during high school.

“You look for people who you think have the potential to do that, but then you just cross your fingers,” Cote said.

Garrec attended Burke Mountain Academy in Vermont her last two years in high school and chose Colby to stay in New England, to compete at the highest college level, and because there seemed to be “a lot less hype” and competitive pressure than at some of the Vermont and New Hampshire schools, she said.

She qualified early for the NCAA Div. I national championships and went in as fourth seed, but had a disappointing finish. A collision with another skier led to a brief fall in the freestyle mass start, and she finished that 15K in 27th place. She was 14th in the 5K classical race. Teammate Kathleen Maynard ’09 finished 32nd in classical and 37th in freestyle in her final Colby race.

—S.B.C.

All-American Alpinists

Colby sent five skiers to the national NCAA Div. I championships in western Maine March 11-14. Lucy Garrec ’12 and Kathleen Maynard ’09 represented women’s Nordic; Emily Colin ’10 was the lone women’s alpine contestant; and Josh Kernan ’10 and Vincent LeBrun-Fortin ’11 skied men’s alpine events. Kernan was first-team All-America in slalom (fourth place), second-team in GS (seventh place); LeBrun-Fortin, a two-time All-American last year, was second-team All-America in slalom (sixth place) this year, despite carrying a gate partway down the course.

SPORTS SHORTS

EMMA LINHARD ’11 of the INDOOR TRACK team earned All-America honors with a sixth-place finish in the mile run at the NCAA Div. III championships in Indiana March 14. Her time was 5:00:44. ... KELSEY POTDEVIN ’09 set a new Colby record in the preliminary heat and earned All-America honors in the 100-yard backstroke for WOMEN’S SWIMMING, finishing eighth at the NCAA nationals in Minnesota March 20. The team had one from each class—POTDEVIN, DANIELLE CARLSON ’10, CHELSEA HENEGHAN ’11, and MANDY FERGUSON ’12—named All-NESCAC. ... WOMEN’S and MEN’S SQUASH sent sister and brother SAMANTHA ’10 and HARRY SMITH ’12 to the national individual championships after the teams finished 23rd and 19th in the nation respectively. ... WOMEN’S ICE HOCKEY won a NESCAC tourney quarterfinal against Bowdoin Feb. 28. Leading scorer BECKY JULIAN ’09 was second-team all-NESCAC for a second year. ... MEN’S SWIMMING standout SAM WAMPLER ’09 was All-NESCAC, setting school records at the NESCAC meet in three individual events and as part of two medley teams. ... WOMEN’S BASKETBALL made it to the NESCAC quarterfinal round but fell to Amherst to finish the season with a 13-12 record. RACHEL MACK ’12 was named Maine Women’s Basketball Coaches Association rookie of the year. ... MEN’S ICE HOCKEY (6-15-3) beat Bowdoin with senior DEAN FEOLE in net Jan. 27 and closed the season with a 6-1 win over St. Michaels. The team graduated just four seniors. MICHAEL BELLIVEAU ’10 and BILL CRINNION ’11 were the top scorers. ... MEN’S BASKETBALL finished 17-8. ADAM CHOICE ’10 was first-team All-NESCAC, ARTIE CUTRONE ’09 was second-team. Co-captains Cutrone and MAC SIMPSON were among four graduating seniors.

For more sports coverage go to www.colby.edu/athletics.