Feature

When Is a Campus a Sanctuary?

By Zoë B. Corwin, Associate Professor and Director of Research, Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California

In the documentary *The Light in Her Eyes,* filmmakers Julia Meltzer and Laura Nix tell the story of a small group of women who create a tiny school in Damascus, Syria, where conservative Muslim women congregate to study the Qur’an and secular subjects. The head of the school takes great pains to ensure that students are protected, and students are careful to constrain any public displays of their learning. In creating the school, the women effectively cultivate the right conditions for learning. The all-female space evolves into a sanctuary where the women converse, share ideas, and challenge each other intellectually; the women flourish, not only academically but also socioemotionally. In this regard, the school functions not as an official sanctuary campus, but as a place of refuge for learning and empowerment.

Institutions of higher education in the United States may seem to have little in common with the small school in Syria. Many colleges and universities in the United States claim to be beacons of free inquiry, freedom of speech, and academic freedom. Students do not have to mask their participation in higher educ-


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Editor’s Note

We Are All Global
By Jennifer O’Brien, Project Manager and Coordinator of Strategic Planning and Development, Bringing Theory to Practice

Sanctuary. Responsibility. South Africa’s “Born Frees.” This issue of our newsletter delves into higher education’s complicated role in the world. Everything is, and always has been, interconnected—but sometimes it’s easy to stay on one side of a line. More and more, the lines are blurring and yet our responsibilities are becoming clearer. Our duty to our global citizenry is a real and relevant local issue. We are starting to understand that if one person perishes, we all do. We are all global.

In this issue, Zoë Corwin of the University of Southern California (USC) tells the story of campus dialogues that are helping faculty, practitioners, administrators, and students explore what it means to be a sanctuary campus—physically, intellectually, and socioemotionally.

Dagmar Kusa of the Bratislava International School for Liberal Arts explains how a single workshop at an international conference led students through an exploration of democratic citizenship and free societies that sparked a persisting desire to discover the nature and challenges of free societies.

Finally, in a guest essay in place of our usual Director’s Column, Caryn McTighe Musil of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) eloquently lays out how recent events have brought higher education to a global crossroads, with an urgent list of priorities and responsibilities in the face of rising nationalism, authoritarianism, and bigotry.
cation or study in secret. On the contrary, students are often praised for their academic achievements and post-secondary institutions are often lauded as places where students can safely experiment and explore. Further, until recently, most campus student safety policies dealt with random acts of violence or natural disasters; they were not designed for protecting particular student groups on campus.

In response to the recent executive order banning travel from selected Muslim-majority countries and the possible elimination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, colleges and universities have been forced to grapple with student security in new ways. Many institutions have quickly opted to declare themselves as sanctuary campuses and thus extend protections to students without legal documentation; others are still struggling to figure out the best way to serve students, staff, and faculty who feel threatened by the new policies.

To address the lack of clarity around the concept of “sanctuary campuses,” the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California (USC) created two documents—one outlining the history of the DACA program and offering suggestions for post-secondary institutions moving forward, and the other delving into the concept of a university as a sanctuary. But even after creating these documents, we at the Pullias Center felt that our treatment of the concept was limited. We recognized that the Black Lives Matter movement on college campuses served as a key indicator that many African American students do not feel safe or valued in higher education. In addition, an uptick in acts of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and bias toward the transgender community has emphasized a need for higher education to scrutinize and expand upon the concept of sanctuary on college and university campuses.

If a primary purpose of higher education is to cultivate critical thinkers and an active, informed citizenry—and if students are most likely to develop those skills when they feel safe in expressing their views and experimenting with novel ways of thinking and interacting with others—then surely the concept of sanctuary takes on greater importance. Given the diversity of US-born students, as well as the significant number of international students studying at US colleges and universities, it becomes critical to consider when, where, and how students, staff, and faculty are best positioned to experience deep intellectual and socioemotional growth.

Our Bringing Theory to Practice
Sanctuary
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campus dialogue grant4 has enabled us to turn attention to the concept of “sanctuary” at our institution. We have focused on issues concerning USC’s status as a potential sanctuary campus but have also pushed the concept further.

We are interested in understanding what it might mean to provide not only physical sanctuary but also intellectual sanctuary. To date we have involved over seventy students, staff, and faculty in dialogues about who feels safe on campus and under what conditions. The dialogues have enabled stakeholders from across an expansive campus to meet each other, listen, and brainstorm possibilities for improving campus climate.

Four preliminary themes have emerged from the dialogues:

• Creating a forum for stakeholders to delve into complex issues is critical. The postsecondary environment often functions as a series of silos. Stakeholders (students, staff, administrators, and faculty) seldom convene across groups—within a university, for example, members from different schools seldom interact. Without cross-pollination, policy discussions run the risk of excluding important voices.

• Identifying potential challenges or barriers leads to troubleshooting possible solutions. For example, it can take a long time to gain support for and implement new institutional policies, yet policies are key to university-wide change. Individual interactions occur at the micro level and do not necessarily lead to wide-scale change, but they can improve the day-to-day experiences of students, staff, and faculty.

• Developing trust among participants is imperative. Selectively recruiting individuals to participate in dialogues leads to more meaningful interactions. Once confirmed, key participants can serve as helpful advocates in recruiting others to join the conversation.

• Self-care matters. While issues of sanctuary at the institutional level are paramount to fostering a positive campus climate, equally important to the climate is the practice of meaningful self-care among diverse campus constituents. The most active change agents often overlook their own self-care.

In the fall, we will draft an action plan for the university that is informed by these dialogues, and we will create materials to inform similar national and international conversations.

4. B’TolP recently awarded thirty-one “campus dialogue” grants to campuses interested in facilitating the “greater purposes of higher education”: learning and discovery, well-being, civic engagement, and preparation for living meaningfully in the world. The dialogues will convene core groups of diverse campus constituents, and they reflect each institution’s unique campus culture and attentiveness to current issues. For more information, see http://www.btop.org/grants-funding/campus-dialogue-grants.

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Zoë Corwin (third from left) worked with University of Southern California students on My Higher Ed Story hosted by the USC Rossier School of Education. The project aims to show personal struggles of students who are underrepresented.
Thank you to everyone who responded to this conference with such enthusiasm and rigor. We were thrilled to host this conference, the first of its kind, and are excited to sustain the momentum and the positive energy of our collective work on intersectionality and student learning, civic engagement, and well-being.

We would like to thank Leeva Chung (University of San Diego) and Laura Rendón (University of Texas at San Antonio) for starting us off with their provocative and thrilling KeyDuet (keynote duet) on “Educating for Wholeness in the Intersections,” and our concluding panel of Maria Ahmad (University of Wisconsin–Madison), Frank Golom (Loyola University Maryland), Rebecca D. Graham (University of the District of Columbia), Karen Kalla (AAC&U), and Janie Ward (Simmons College) for their thoughtful reflections and for addressing the question, “Where do we go from here?”

We would also like to thank all participants for their active engagement—their presentations, thoughtful comments or questions, and productive and exciting hallway conversations. We hope to capture the conference’s uplifting energy in post-conference products and look forward to sharing those with you on the website and social media.

We are engaged in producing, in partnership with AAC&U, an upcoming issue of AAC&U’s quarterly, Diversity & Democracy, that will highlight conference themes.

For now, you can read more about the conference here: http://www.bttop.org/bttop-national-conference-whole-student-intersectionality-and-well-being.

For more information about BTtoP, visit BTtoP.org
Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (BISLA) has collaborated with the Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) project since 2011, when we hosted our first workshop on democratic citizenship under the leadership of Don Harward, director of BTtoP. This workshop served as a spark for participating students; it motivated them to establish a student academic journal for undergraduate research. Since its founding in 2012, the Liberal Herald has organized four annual international conferences, bringing together students, faculty, and experts from across Europe and beyond. Now alumni, the founders are still engaged with the organization, involving current students as interns and volunteers in an ever-growing production.

The first two conferences focused on the principles of freedom and dignity in present societies. They took place at BISLA, with approximately twenty presenters showcasing their research at each event. Both resulted in publications—special issues of Kritika & Kontext, a peer-reviewed journal published at BISLA. Occurring during the peak of the 2015 refugee crisis, the third conference focused on questions about the future of politics in Central and Eastern Europe and explored new challenges and moral questions around citizenship and identity. This conference was cosponsored by the Open Society Foundation and several individual sponsors who supported awards for student essays.

Last August, the Liberal Herald joined forces with the Central European University’s (CEU) political science department to help organize a two-day undergraduate conference in Budapest, “The Challenge of the Refugee Crisis—Panacea or Pandemonium for Europe?” Prior to the conference, the Herald offered a series of workshops to help BISLA students develop their research focus and methods and prepare their work for submission; four of the twelve BISLA submissions were selected for inclusion in the conference. Undergraduate students from various parts of the world attended the two-day conference and examined the topic of migration from the perspectives of refugees, the state, urban planning, narrative construction, and international relations. Selected conference presentations were developed as papers and are awaiting publication in the CEU Political Science Journal.

This year, the Liberal Herald is

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focusing on the shifts in identities and perceptions of the Self and the Other in Third Wave democracies. Slovakia and its neighbors have transitioned from communism to democracy since the 1989 revolutions. At the same time, democratization has taken place in several countries of Latin America, East Asia, and South Africa. The conference, titled “(Dis)continuous Identities: Globalization, Trauma, and Reconciliation,” seeks to compare the phenomena related to these transitions, particularly questions about the presence of “the ghosts of the past” in the present political discourse and the mechanisms for addressing the past chosen by the transitioning regimes.

These countries are witnessing the rise of a new generation that is entering adulthood. The “Born Frees,” as they are commonly called in South Africa, were born after the fall of the oppressive regimes, and their generation is shaped by very different priorities and social contexts than those of their parents or grandparents. Not bogged down by learned helplessness stemming from the communist past, nor tied by loyalties to the former opposition struggle leaders or to new regimes that asked for patience with transition, the Born Frees are challenging their governments and asking for justice and transparency in governance. The *Herald* will host students and faculty from the Central European region and Germany, and will welcome a group from South Africa.

Throughout the first four years of the Liberal Herald’s existence, its founding group of students learned “on the go” how to organize a successful international student conference, which is the only event of its kind in this region. Until 2016, when the CEU started organizing conferences for undergraduate students, there were few opportunities for students to present their original research in front of an international audience. The *Herald* is also special because it brings experts and faculty into the conference, which is proving to be a great learning experience not only for the students but for the participating academics as well.

The *Liberal Herald* has grown in size and matured, and it is seeking to become a permanent year-round platform for undergraduate research. The small original seminar, which was funded by BTtoP, sparked and supported a confident student organization; the *Liberal Herald* is now training new cohorts of students each year and serves as a starting point where they can “cut their teeth” as they enter the world of academia.
Open inquiry, critical judgment, and a habit of refusing automatic compliance to authority are traits that have always made higher education dangerous to a totalitarian society that seeks censorship instead of investigation, indoctrination instead of questioning, and obedience instead of freethinking. Teaching students to ask questions, imagine alternatives, discern truth, distinguish between fact and fiction, and listen carefully to learn from opposing views all combine to disrupt unexamined norms and empower a citizenry.

The close symbiosis of flourishing democracies and higher education was brought home to me when I headed the US delegation in a Ford Foundation–funded initiative called the Tri-National Project from 1995 to 1999 that included India, South Africa, and the United States. Its purpose was to explore the role of higher education in diverse democracies. Together we represented the largest, the oldest, and, at the time, the newest democracies. Each country had a history of resisting and defeating a colonial ruler, all included profoundly diverse populations, and each saw higher education as a site for citizenship and nation building.

Having been intensely immersed in scholarship, teaching, and campus climate issues related to US diversity, I was challenged by the Tri-National Project to understand my local work as global work. The experience was utterly transformative. Like the best US diversity work and global learning, our engagement relied on cross-country comparisons, cultural immersion, multiple perspectives, intercultural learning, intersectional identities, and accounts of citizen activism. Diversity across shifting and differing dimensions illuminated our thinking about caste, religion, and gender in India; race, class, and gender in the United States; or race, wealth, and tribal/ethnic identity in South Africa. All of us believed that higher education had to challenge the stratification systems that kept such inequalities firmly in place.

To educate students for global citizenship is to ask students, regardless of country or culture, to immerse themselves with open minds and hearts in the politics, culture, and history of other people’s countries—and their own. This can be brought home for students, as it was for us as delegates, by confronting (1) the gruesome historical realities in anti-apartheid museums and Robben Island, where political prisoners such as Nelsen Mandela were incarcerated; (2) the consequences of being denied full citizenship in the Pueblo of Zuni in New Mexico or on the streets of Harlem; or (3) the stark economic inequalities represented by the fact that impoverished local Indian populations get their drinking water from a ditch adjacent to the dazzling Taj Mahal. Interrogating and unraveling such intertwined systems that confer advantage or anguish are practices at the core of educating for responsible global citizenship.

“Teaching students to ask questions, imagine alternatives, discern truth, distinguish between fact and fiction, and listen carefully to learn from opposing views all combine to disrupt unexamined norms and empower a citizenry.”

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Table Mountain, overlooking Capetown, South Africa, as viewed by boat on the way to Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated.

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the blurred lines of local and global are illuminated? How do we teach that we are each *global* in our diverse identities; that we are *all the Other*? As institutions wade into these thorny, illuminating challenges—and do so in an age of rising bigotry, nativism, and authoritarianism—several agenda items have special priority:

- Challenge historical fallacies and repeated misinformation and myths.
- Explore identity across multiple levels (individual, local, global) as a pathway to understanding connections and disconnections.
- Deploy the rich multicultural, multinational experience on most contemporary campuses as a microcosm of global diversity.
- Organize college learning to address the messy, complex challenges that destabilize our common future—creatively, collaboratively, and with hands-on engagement in local and global contexts.
- Brand this work in higher education as preparation for meaningful, socially responsible living—that is, for global citizenship.

As the Tri-National Project ended, a new global partnership emerged between the Council of Europe and the United States as colleges and universities on both sides of the pond explored how effective higher education was as a site for democratic citizenship in the face of what felt like irresolvable conflicts, whether in Kosovo; Belfast, Northern Ireland; or Chester, Pennsylvania. The partnership evolved into the Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy and is affiliated with the Council of Europe.

“Should we retreat from our commitments to global social justice or resist the whipping headwinds howling for us to succumb to fear of the Other?”

which was founded in 1949 after World War II to promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

In addition to comparative research projects and publications, the consortium has sponsored four global forums. The fifth, which will take place in Rome in June 2017, is titled “Higher Education for Diversity, Social Inclusion, and Community: A Democratic Imperative.” In Rome, we will tackle crosscutting global issues like knowledge in an age of post-truth politics, diversity and social inclusion in the face of fierce racial and religious bigotry, and immigration and support for refugees in a period of virulent nativism.

Should we retreat from our commitments to global social justice or resist the whipping headwinds howling for us to succumb to fear of the Other? Colleges and universities, as sites for global citizenship, need to do their job: construct additional entryways of accessibility, create more permeable borders for intellectual exchange nationally and locally, and embrace difference as a means of achieving new knowledge and forging a third way out of seemingly intractable problems. That choice will make higher education dangerously democratic, indeed.
**Travels**

**BTtoP Director Don Harward Presents Panel at 2017 NASPA Annual Conference in San Antonio**

From March 13 to 14, Don Harward, director of the Bringing Theory to Practice project (BTtoP) and president emeritus of Bates Colleges, traveled to San Antonio, Texas, to moderate a panel, “Well-Being and Its Relevance for Underserved Students,” at the 2017 NASPA Annual Conference. With Corey Keyes of Emory University, a longtime BTtoP colleague, and Charlotte Marshall of Widener University, a co-principal investigator of Widener’s BTtoP Well-Being Research Grant, Harward facilitated a dialogue exploring the theoretical justification and institutional evidence for attention to the well-being of underserved student populations as a way of promoting their sense of belonging and dimensions of their self-realization, flourishing, and identity formation.

**BTtoP Director Don Harward Delivers Lecture at Bates College in Maine**

BTtoP Director Don Harward traveled to Lewiston, Maine, on March 24 to give a lecture at Bates College, where he previously served as president from 1989 to 2002. Titled “Well-Being and Higher Education: And the Pursuit of Happiness,” the talk explored, within the context of the college campus, the two major notions of well-being: the hedonic and the eudaimonic. Harward argued that while attention to hedonic well-being has become ubiquitous within modern culture—as evidenced by an increased attention to happiness or the concept of “hygge,” a Danish term for “a quality of cosiness and comfortable conviviality that engenders a feeling of contentment or well-being”—more attention must be given to understanding eudaemonic well-being. Eudaemonic well-being, which is understood as self-realization or “a life well-lived,” must be achieved by exposing students to difference, risk, and opportunities for engagement and growth if universities are to truly fulfill their greater purposes.

**BTtoP National Evaluator Ashley Finley Presents in Hong Kong on Well-Being and Higher Education**

Ashley Finley, BTtoP’s national evaluator and associate vice president for academic affairs and dean of the Dominican Experience at Dominican University, will give a public talk on “Well-Being as an Essential Outcome of Higher Education” at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on June 27 as part of the university’s Institute on General Education. The talk will focus on how well-being and personal development are inextricably linked with learning and therefore are at the center of any university mission. Particular emphasis will be given to BTtoP’s fifteen Well-Being Research Grantees who are currently examining and assessing the practices that contribute to positive well-being and personal development among underserved students. Following the presentation, Finley will also lead a workshop at the conference on the role of civic engagement in students’ intellectual and personal development and the intersection of these practices with students’ well-being.

**News**

**Heidi Elmendorf Selected as Finalist for Baylor’s $250,000 Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching**

BTtoP colleague Heidi Elmendorf (associate professor of biology, Georgetown University) has been chosen as a finalist for Baylor University’s $250,000 2018 Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching. From the award’s website: “Three preeminent scholar/teachers from US universities have been selected as finalists for Baylor University’s 2018 Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching, the only national teaching award—with the single largest monetary reward of $250,000—presented by a college or university to an individual for exceptional teaching. The winning professor will be announced by Baylor in spring 2018.” The other finalists are Neil K. Garg, professor of chemistry, University of California–Los Angeles, and Clinton O. Longenecker, distinguished university professor of leadership, The University of Toledo.

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In Brief: BTtoP News and Notes


What We’re Reading

Teaching the Whole Student: Engaged Learning with Heart, Mind, and Spirit
Edited by David Schoem, Christine Modey, and Edward P. St. John
Foreword by Beverly Daniel Tatum
“Teaching the Whole Student is a compendium of engaged teaching approaches by faculty across disciplines. These inspiring authors offer models for instructors who care deeply about their students, respect and recognize students’ social identities and lived experiences, and are interested in creating community and environments of openness and trust to foster deep-learning, academic success, and meaning-making.”

Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice and Liberation
By Laura I. Rendón
Foreword by Mark Nepo
“The motivation for the quest that Laura Rendón shares in this book was the realization that she, along with many educators, had lost sight of the deeper, relationship-centered essence of education, and lost touch with the fine balance between educating for academics and educating for life. Her purpose is to reconnect readers with the original impulse that led them to become educators; and to help them rediscover, with her, their passion for teaching and learning in the service of others and for the well-being of our society.”

Practice for Life: Making Decisions in College
By Lee Cuba, Nancy Jennings, Suzanne Lovett, and Joseph Swingle
“From the day they arrive on campus, college students spend four years—or sometimes more—making decisions that shape every aspect of their academic and social lives. Whether choosing a major or a roommate, some students embrace decision-making as an opportunity for growth, while others seek to minimize challenges and avoid risk. Practice for Life builds a compelling case that a liberal arts education offers students a complex, valuable process of self-creation, one that begins in college but continues far beyond graduation.”

Understanding Intercultural Communication
By Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva C. Chung
“Written in a conversational style, this book introduces students to the foundations of intercultural communication, a vibrant discipline within the field. Authors Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva Chung take a multicontextual, inclusive approach that balances international and intercultural communication issues against US domestic diversity issues. In addition to emphasizing a value-oriented perspective on intercultural encounters, the text contains a robust ethical chapter, complete with specific guidelines that will help students become ethical intercultural communicators.”

Intersectionality in Action: A Guide for Faculty and Campus Leaders for Creating Inclusive Classrooms and Institutions
Edited by Brooke Barnett and Peter Felten
Foreword by Eboo Patel
“This book offers models for institutions to move intentionally toward intersections—of study abroad and multiculturalism, of race and gender and religion, and of other essential aspects of our educational programs and our students’ identities—to open doors to new possibilities that better prepare our students for life in a diverse world, and that allow our institutions to become more efficient and effective as we strive to not simply do things better in our own separate spheres, but to do better things by working together across difference.”
The Bringing Theory to Practice Project (BToP) is an independent national effort. It is funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation of New York and functions in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in Washington, DC.

The Charles Engelhard Foundation is a New York-based foundation whose mission focuses on projects in higher and secondary education, cultural, medical, religious, wildlife, and conservation organizations.

The S. Engelhard Center is a nonprofit public charitable foundation; its mission is to support projects and initiatives that affect greater and sustained commitments by educational institutions at all levels to provide effective means of addressing the intellectual, emotional, and civic development of today’s students in preparation for claiming their positive future.

Now Available from Bringing Theory to Practice

Well-Being and Higher Education: A Strategy for Change and the Realization of Education’s Greater Purposes

Well-Being and Higher Education is a book about well-being and its multiple connections to higher education—and why those connections matter. The thirty-five-piece volume of essays and provocations responds to the current landscape of challenges higher education faces today and the need to preserve and revive the institution’s role of looking beyond itself to a greater good.

For more information: www.bttop.org/resources/publications