

UNT | CASTLEBERRY PEACE INSTITUTE

Winter 2015 Newsletter



Message From The Director

The Castleberry Peace Institute celebrated its five-year anniversary in 2014. Under the leadership of founding CPI Director, Professor David Mason the Institute has developed a wonderful record of supporting student scholarship, hosting internationally known experts and policymakers at UNT, and enhancing our strong peace science curriculum. With this impressive record of accomplishment as his legacy, Professor Mason decided to step down and pass the baton of CPI leadership to me, Professor James Meernik. I am honored to be the new Director of the Castleberry Peace Institute and look forward to building upon the tremendous foundation Professor Mason established. You can read about my research and teaching at <http://castleberry.unt.edu/faculty>.

I look forward to bringing you more news about our faculty's award-winning research and teaching and the accomplishments of our alumni. On March 11 CPI is hosting a special show to highlight this work at UNT on the Square in Denton. That evening, from 7 pm until 9 pm our students and faculty will be showcasing through visual displays some of our most fascinating findings on how we can advance human security in the world today. And if these displays were not enough, refreshments will be provided. Your presence is all that is needed to make this a night to remember. Please make plans to attend!

Opening Note

Since its beginnings in 2009, the Castleberry Peace Institute and the faculty of the Department of Political Science have embarked on many, exciting projects to advance our knowledge of peace science and make our world a better place. In this edition of our CPI Newsletter we talk about two of these projects. Professor Marijke Breuning's research sheds light on the popular, and sometimes controversial topic of inter-country adoptions. Professor Jacqueline DeMeritt studies why presumably "normal" individuals commit human rights abuses on innocent people when given the order. Through support of this research, the Castleberry Peace Institute shows why

the most exciting research and teaching on peace is taking place at the University of North Texas.

Intercountry Adoption: How Do We Protect The Children

When we talk about making the world a better place, most of us are thinking about the future. We are thinking about the kind of world we are bequeathing to our children, yet our understanding of who these children are and what their needs are take a back seat to our focus on powerful leaders and international crises. Professor Marijke Breuning's research on the phenomenon of inter-country adoptions aims to change that. This is an especially important topic here in the United States. You might be surprised to learn that more



Dr. Marijke Breuning

than half of all internationally adopted children join families in the United States.

Dr. Breuning is an award-winning professor of political science at the University of North Texas and co-editor of the *American Political Science Review*, the field's most prestigious journal, hosted at the University of North Texas. Her research concerns government compliance with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and the role played by children's rights groups in fostering acceptance of and compliance with the Hague Convention.



There have long been concerns that some countries and even criminal organizations have exploited the heartfelt desires of parents seeking to adopt children overseas. No doubt many of you have read about orphanages that resemble something out of a Charles Dickens novel or human trafficking in children. The Hague Convention is designed to enhance the accountability and transparency of the international adoption process to avoid these problems. While we often overlook the complications of this practice, just think about trying to adopt a child that has no birth certificate or health records. How can we be sure that they don't have family that is able to take care of them? Many countries lack the resources and bureaucracy to ensure adoption is an honest enterprise. This is where NGO support comes in.

NGOs serve two purposes regarding orphaned and vulnerable children. Some serve these children directly by providing care and shelter, others are focused on capacity building and creating international awareness. Dr. Breuning's research has focused on the role that the latter organizations play in improving

compliance with the Hague Convention. She has found that, unlike the success of international "naming and shaming" campaigns regarding human rights violations, children's rights NGOs' efforts have not resulted in greater state acceptance of the Hague Convention. An important factor here is that the demand for transparency requires bureaucratic and institutional resources beyond what some nations can provide.

Dr. Breuning's research suggests that capacity building will be important to improve not only transparency and accountability in intercountry adoption, but child welfare overall. And as child welfare improves, sending countries are not only able to participate in intercountry adoption in ways that comply with the Hague Convention, but are also better able to care for children domestically.

Dr. Breuning recently presented her research at a conference of the International Studies Association in October, 2014. Thanks to her continued research, the world is now better prepared to confront the challenges surrounding inter-country adoption.

Death Squads: Why Do They Kill?



Dr. Jacqueline DeMeritt

History has proven that it is incredibly difficult to stop the Hitler's and Stalin's of this world. The atrocities these leaders order, however, would not be possible

without the willingness of many others to follow their commands. Dr. Jacqueline DeMeritt, assistant professor of political science at University of North Texas, is leading a groundbreaking project to understand why individuals who take part in death squads obey orders to commit these horrible atrocities.

To answer this critical question, Dr. DeMeritt has chosen to focus on the *Einsatzgruppen* which were semi-autonomous mobile killing units tasked with liquidating Russia's Jews, Romany (gypsies), and communists during World War II. By the time they were disbanded they had killed over 1.5 million people.



Records of the *Einsatzgruppen*'s daily reports are chronicled at the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Dr. DeMeritt acquired copies of these reports and is analyzing them to discover why the execution of civilians was not complied with uniformly. Patterns began to emerge from individual cases.

Early results suggest that Hitler's death squads were driven largely by practical considerations. They were more likely to kill when they derived benefits from that killing. Some benefits were tangible, including the procurement of food and clothing that increased individual members' chances of survival through winter. Other benefits were less tangible. In some cases, the death squads reported killing in order to prevent epidemics and protect their own health. In others, they reported killing accused criminals because those criminals threatened their own safety and security. Finally, death squad members seem to have derived

benefit from acting in socially acceptable ways; they became more likely to participate (i.e., to kill) as killing became the status quo.

It is clear from her research that the context of when killing occurs, not just politically but socioeconomically, is crucial in understanding why death squads kill or why they refrain from doing so. Dr. DeMeritt presented her initial findings at the 2014 meeting of the International Studies Association.

Thanks to Dr. DeMeritt, we know more about why ostensibly "ordinary" people commit extraordinary acts of violence. Her research will be vital in helping to prevent the emergence of the kinds of conditions that make individuals more likely to engage in such horrific behavior. This project exemplifies the importance of the work being done through the contributions generously provided by the Castleberry Peace Institute.

ICTY: A Special Relationship with UNT



The United Nations established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1993 to prosecute individuals suspected of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Because of the hard work and passion of Dr. Kimi King and Dr. Jim Meernik, the Castleberry Peace Institute has developed a special relationship with the ICTY Victims and Witnesses Service unit to study the impact that testifying has had on witnesses. This partnership has been ongoing for several years and this

summer Drs. King and Meernik will be presenting the latest results to Tribunal officials. See more at <http://www.icty.org/sid/10948>

In addition, Drs. Meernik, King and their research team have partnered with the Tribunal's Outreach office to study how young people in the former Yugoslavia are learning to reconcile with the former adversaries. Dr. King and Dr. Meernik will present this research with three Ph.D. students, Ayal Feinberg, Roman Krastev and Melissa McKay at the International Studies Association Human Rights Conference in The Hague this summer.



Vivian Castleberry

End Note

To learn more about the exceptional research projects associated with the Castleberry Peace Institute and opportunities to contribute, please visit www.castlberry.unt.edu or contact James Meernik, Director of the Castleberry Peace Institute at meernik@unt.edu

Support CPI

The Castleberry Peace Institute depends on its donors and supporters to carry out its mission to promote education and research on peace and conflict. Your gift can help to bring speakers to campus, provide scholarships to promising students, support graduate and undergraduate assistants, host conferences and events, and strengthen our research programs. Our funding priorities include:

- **Enhance research opportunities.** The Peace Research Laboratory requires computing hardware, software, and archival material to enable faculty and students to conduct studies of pressing issues relating to national and international security.
- **Support for the 'Peace, Democracy, and Human Rights' lecture series.** The CPI's mission to educate and empower the UNT community is enhanced by our ability to invite public figures and renowned scholars to speak about current topics relating to peace, democracy, and human rights.
- **Scholarships for promising graduate and undergraduate students.** UNT students need financial assistance to finish their studies, participate in internship opportunities, and finish their dissertations and theses. Donor support can help students in need of assistance to succeed.
- **Support for study abroad opportunities.** Learning about peace, democracy, and human rights is reinforced through study abroad opportunities. Donors can help fund life-changing experiences abroad.

To learn more about opportunities to help, contact James Meernik, Director of the Castleberry Peace Institute, Professor of Political Science at UNT at James.Meernik@unt.edu.