University of North Texas Spring 2019 Newsletter:

Castleberry Peace Institute

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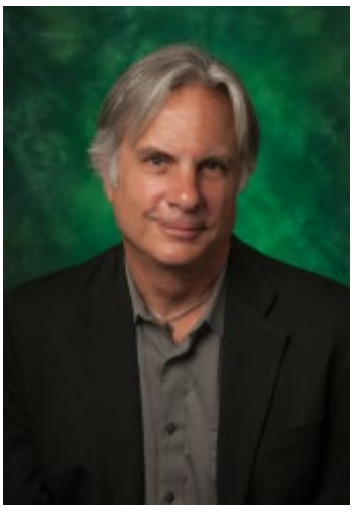
What a year 2018 has been for the Castleberry Peace Institute! We have been very fortunate in so many ways as we saw much of our long-germinating work finally come to fruition. Throughout the year, the profile of the Castleberry Peace Institute has been raised substantially as a national and international leader in peace studies teaching, scholarship and service. 2018 started with a bang when we received word that our book on peace and justice in Colombia, which brings together scholars from the US, Colombia and throughout the world to analyze the impact of the Colombian peace and justice processes, was accepted for publication at Cambridge University Press. The book should be published in the summer of 2019. Prof. Jacqueline Demeritt (UNT) and Mauricio Uribe (EAFIT University, Medellin Colombia) have been my invaluable partners and co-editors.

We held a conference, funded by the National Science Foundation, on Language Endangerment and Political Violence in October. The conference brought together linguists and political scientists from around the world to discuss the relationship between political violence and the loss of languages spoken by only small numbers of people.

We are also working on a paper based on the conference findings. We were most excited by the invitation we received to give a public presentation at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. in March. I am so appreciative of the great work my colleagues, Professor Shobhana Chelliah of the Linguistics Department and Prof. Kimi King for their leadership on this project.

Finally, our most exciting news of all. We have been working for the past several years to raise funds for a scholarship--the Vivian Castleberry Trailblazer scholarship. I am pleased to announce that we have reached our goal of raising $100,000 and will now formally endow the scholarship!! The Vivian Castleberry Trailblazer scholarship will support students who are trailblazers, (or on their way to being trailblazers) in peace and peace studies, especially on issues pertaining to women. Early in 2020 we will announce the first scholarship winner. We thank our many supporters for their generous donations to the scholarship fund--thank you for honoring Vivian's legacy.

Thank you again to all of our supporters and let's make 2019 an even better year!



James Meernik, Director Castleberry Peace Institute.

Follow us on Facebook, online (castleberry.unt.edu) or send me an email at meernik@unt.edu

IN THE NEWS

On January 8, the Castleberry Peace Institute, the Department of Political Science, and the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences hosted a reception for our dear friends from the Peacemakers organization in Dallas to receive a very generous donation from them. This donation, coupled with our other, end-of-year, fundraising means that the value of the Vivian Castleberry Trailblazer Scholarship reached our $100,000 goal! We talked about Vivian Castleberry, her legacy, and the great good this scholarship will do helping our students engage in the kind of learning, research and promotion of peace that would make Vivian proud! A huge, huge thank you to our friends at Peacemakers for all of their generosity and support over the years. A special thanks also to the folks in the CLASS Development Office who helped arrange this wonderful reception. Stay tuned for further information as we begin awarding this scholarship!

On October 4-5, Professors Jim Meernk and Kimi King in the Department of Political Science and Professor Shobhana Chelliah in the Department of Linguistics hosted a conference on the topic of "Language Endangerment and Political Violence". The conference explored the intersections of research between the study of linguistics and the study of politics, especially political violence. The conference was funded by the National Science Foundation and featured scholars from political science, linguistics, anthropology and sociology from across the world. As a result of the conference we also gave a public presentation at the Smithsonian Institution for Folklife and Cultural Heirtage in Washington D.C. on March 22, 2019. We are also developing a report for publication that will describe and analyze the lessons learned, and will continue to work with our collaborators on the development of teaching materials for classes that explore language and political violence.

Conference participants at the UNT Union at the close of the conference.

Prof. Shobana Chelliah introducing keynote speaker, Prof. Jeff Good, of SUNY Buffalo

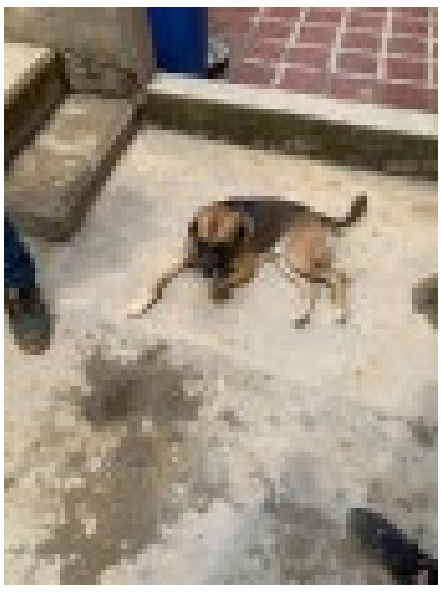
At the Smithsonian Institution before Professors Chelliah, King, I and other scholars presented our conclusions on political violence and language endangerment.

Professor Meernik traveled to Medellin, Colombia in October, 2018, February 2019 and April 2019 to work with colleagues at the Pontifical Bolivarian University. PBU is establishing its own peace studies institute and Professor Meernik worked with Professor Carlos Builes of the Political Science Department and PBU administrators to discuss important elements of a peace studies institute, challenges and especially the opportunity to conduct research into the effects of the Colombian peace process (the government of Colombia reached an agreement with rebels of the FARC [the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] to end a 50+ year long civil war). Professor Meernik made a presentation on "What Keeps the Peace?", which focused on what we know about maintaining peace after war and the challenges facing Colombia in the coming years.

Professor Meernik, Professor Builles (3rd from left) and students from UPB and the National University of Colombia, Medellin.

In February of 2019, Professor Meernik travelled again to Medellin to begin research on a project studying internally displaced persons in and around Medellin, Colombia . Medellin is especially challenged as there was a great deal of fighting and violence in the surrounding communities and as many individuals fled conflict zones to come to the comparative safety of new communities rising up on the outskirts of the city. These areas, which generally fall outside city boundaries do not generally enjoy the same level of security and services as Medellin itself. This has made them a haven for narco traffickers and criminal gangs that utilize their strategic location between the countryside and the city for the transportation of drugs and arms.

Professor Meernik and his Colombian partners spent time in the Altavista community to hike on the trail used by the armed actors, and visit with community leaders. The research project will begin with an inventory of all the different government projects that have been initiated in Altavista. We will then interview residents of the community, their leaders and officials with the Medellin city government to assess what projects have worked and which have not. This information will be used to help improve the security situation and identify critical resources needed to build peace in Altavista and other communities like it.



The photos show the view from Altavista down into Medellin. This is along the trail that has been used for centuries by the indigenous population, but more recently by those using it as a transit point to bring weapons and drugs through the community onto their final destination. The second photo shows several of the community leaders Carlos Builles has been meeting with the past year. The individuals include people from the Medellin city government, the Colombian military, representatives of community groups and students.

Last, but not least is "Mister" the dog, who is also a conflict refugee. Mister was forced to leave the nearby farm he had lived on because he was barking too much at the gang members and rebels who were passing by the farm. The armed actors told the farmer to do something about his dog and so the dog was invited to live at the community center in Altavista where he gets to play with the children all day.

On April 25, 2018 students in Professor King and Professor Meernik's "Justice after War" class presented their research on how nations and international organizations can affect peace and justice in post conflict nations. Students presented research on topics such as the impact of the International Criminal Court on deterring conflict (such as Seyma Akyol's research poster below), the prospects for holding individuals accountable for human rights violations in countries like Myanmar and Venezuela; whether certain forms of justice, such as community and restorative justice projects, work better than criminal prosecutions, and many other topics. We were pleased to welcome over 60 people who attended the event and spoke with the students.

Student News

Alaina McGuffee and Mikayla Jones, two students who have been working with Professor Bethany Blackstone as CPI/Political Science Research Fellows presented the results of their research collaboration at the Southern Political Science Association meeting in January at a special panel for undergraduate students. Alaina presented, "Policymaking at the Intersection of Legislative and Judicial Politics", which examines the relationship between the Supreme Court and the US Congress. Mikayla presented "Comparing the Policy Agendas of the U.S. Supreme Court and the U.S. Congress", which looks at the policy agendas of the US Supreme Court and Congress, their similarities and differences, and how this affects policymaking. Alaina also began the BA/MA program this past Fall and so has already begun taking graduate-level courses.

Isabel Dominguez, who has been working with Professor Andrea Silva is conducting research that compares the disaster relief efforts in Houston in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey and in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Professor Silva is also working with another CPI Fellow, Emily Bell, who is studying how and under what conditions women of color are hired as staff in congressional legislative offices in Washington D.C.

Former CPI Fellow, Josue Barron who graduated from UNT in May and is preparing for law school worked on a project with Dr. Meernik on the verdicts and sentences reached by the Bosnian War Crimes Chamber in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The paper has now been published in the *International Criminal Law Review*.

April 6 was a very special day for CPI. We completed our first visit to the Uraba region of Colombia and the city of Turbo to do our part to help build peace in a land that has known too much violence. It has been fought over by the drug traffickers, the paramilitaries, the FARC guerillas and the government because of its strategic location. Violence continues, unfortunately, to this day as the narcos and the paramilitaries are targeting social activists and human rights leaders who are looking for the government to implement the terms of the recently established peace treaty with the FARC. Despite these obstacles and threats there are still many people like our partner Father Neil and the women's groups, youth groups and cultural groups who are trying to build a community that is safe for everyone.

CPI worked with our Peace Studies class at UNT to deliver school supplies to the little town of Bocas del la Atrato. The many students and community members who attended the big event their school organized were so appreciative of our presence and our work. I met many people throughout the Uraba region who were excited to partner with us on projects to help their community. I'm very excited and so proud that our work involving Colombia involves research, teaching and being active in practicing what we preach about peace. Every little bit helps and our concern for people who are too often marginalized is very much appreciated. A big thank you to Father Neil, Olga, Julian, Esperanza, Jorge, Adrianna, Alejandro, and Sandra. And a special thank you to my UNT Peace Studies class for all of their hard work!

Email me at meernik@unt.edu and we will be happy to include it in our next newsletter and on our web site.

Thank you for all of your support!

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