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A monk prays at a dome-shaped shrine, or *stupa*, at Borobudur, a Mahayana Buddhist temple in Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia. Borobudur, established in the 700s and 800s, is the largest Buddhist temple in the world. In Indonesia, which is the most populous Muslim-majority country in the world, most Buddhists are of Chinese heritage, and they have often had to confront prejudice and violent attacks.

## Spirituality and Religion in Today's World: Rich Traditions, Volatile Mixes

Coverage of this 2018 Focus project is on pages 8-38.

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# International Agenda

Published once per semester by the International Institute (SCII)

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SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

## International Institute

Schoolcraft College  
 18600 Haggerty Road  
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<http://www.schoolcraft.edu/scii/international-institute>

The mission of the Schoolcraft College International Institute is to coordinate cross-cultural learning opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the community. The Institute strives to enhance the international content of coursework, programs, and other College activities so participants better appreciate both the diversities and commonalities among world cultures, and better understand the global forces shaping people's lives.

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## Take Our Survey!



After looking through these pages, kindly complete a brief online survey about *International Agenda*. The survey collects feedback about this issue, and suggestions for future issues.

The survey can be accessed at this URL:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QN8HBLZ>



## SCII Meeting Schedule

International Institute meetings are open to all who want to learn or to help out. New folks are always welcome. Meetings are on Fridays at 12-2 pm in the Liberal Arts Building:

- September 21, 2018
- October 19, 2018
- January 25, 2019
- February 15, 2019
- March 10, 2019
- May 10, 2019.

## GlobalEYEzers

GlobalEYEzers, a group affiliated with SCII, meets over lunch to discuss current events relevant to international/intercultural issues. Faculty and staff, as well as students and community members, are welcome. Meetings are on Fridays at 12-2 pm in the Liberal Arts Building:

- October 26, 2018
- February 22, 2019.

For more information, contact English Prof. Anna Maheshwari at [amaheshw@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:amaheshw@schoolcraft.edu) or 734-462-7188.



## Campus News & Kudos

**Rob Leadley** (Dean of Occupational Programs and Economic Development) and his wife, **Catherine Leadley**, have been house parents for **Paula Salazar**, a Washtenaw Community College student from Belize. The arrangement came about via regular missionary trips organized by Dexter United Methodist Church. Paula and her mother had fled an abusive home years ago, and dedicated their lives to helping children and others in Belize living in extreme rural poverty. At WCC, Paula earned a 3.95 GPA, helped lead several student organizations, and won a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation transfer scholarship. This past June she delivered the student valedictory speech at commencement, which her mother came from Belize to attend.

The Pageturners Book Club, coordinated by English Prof. **Elzbieta Rybicka**, organized two January events in conjunction with MLK Day. On Jan. 25, there was a screening of “Selma” (2014), a drama based on the 1965 civil rights march from Selma, AL, to the state’s capital, Montgomery, led by James Bevel, Hosea Williams, Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Lewis. On Jan. 30 there was a discussion of *March: Book One*, a graphic novel about U.S. Congressman John Lewis’s fight against segregation as a youth in rural Alabama, his first meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr., and his participation in lunch counter sit-ins as a student. This Fall, the Pageturners events begin on Sep. 24-25 with a film screening and discussion of Henrik Ibsen’s famous play, “A Doll’s House”; watch <http://www.schoolcraft.edu/pageturners/> for details. The same play is being presented by Schoolcraft’s Theatre Dept. this Fall under the direction of **Paul C. Beer**, with six performances between Oct. 26 and Nov. 10; for more information, see <http://www.schoolcraft.edu/theatre/events>.

Last Fall and Winter terms, **John Brender**, Director of the Confucius Institute at Wayne State Univ. (CI-WSU), organized weekly “Confucius Cafés” on our campus in the Jeffress Center on Tuesdays at 1:15 – 2:00 pm. The events provided cultural education accompanied by Chinese food and tea. For example, on Feb. 6, **Xingli Fan** (Vice Director of CI-WSU) taught us about the many preparations that go into the average person’s celebration of Chinese New Year; on Feb. 13, **Xiaodong Wei** performed a musical recital on the *erhu* and *guzhen* as part of a New Year’s gala that was attended by about 250 people; and on Apr. 3, Dr. Brender spoke about “Chinese and Japanese: What’s the Difference?”. Starting this Fall, the events will be scheduled at faculty request.

**Todd Stowell**, director of the Student Activities Office, organized a campus visit of “Hateful Things”, a traveling exhibit from the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia (Ferris State Univ.). Opening at the Multicultural Fair and running Mar. 29 – Apr. 12, the exhibit in Lower Waterman displayed 39 items of material culture embodying the terrible Jim Crow legacy, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the present. The visit was supported by the SC Foundation and *The Schoolcraft Connection* student newspaper.

More than 3,250 visitors attended Schoolcraft’s 17<sup>th</sup> annual **Multicultural Fair**, held in the VisTaTech Center on Mar. 29. The fair featured 20 display tables of dress, artifacts, and language from around the world; performances by nine visiting troupes, such as the Manoogian School’s Armenian Dancers and the Marcus Garvey Academy’s African Drum and Dance Ensemble; ethnic food samples; and more. Kudos to the Fair organizing committee: **Helen Ditouras** (English), **Kim Lark** (History), **Kyla Lahiff** and **Laura Leshok** (Academic Advising), **Josselyn Moore** (Anthropology/ Sociology), and **Todd Stowell** (Student Activities Office).

English Prof. **Helen Ditouras**, Faculty Co-chair of our International Institute, published an article, “Re-Imagining Communities: Creating a Space for International Student Success”, in the Schoolcraft-based national journal, *Community College Enterprise* (Spring 2018). The article summarizes the types of activities carried out by SCII, and highlights the impact of such activities in creating a more broadminded, supportive atmosphere for international students on our campuses.

**Anita Süess Kaushik** (Foreign Languages) led a May 17-31 Discover Europe educational tour of selected sites in The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, France, and England. This was the 11<sup>th</sup> overseas study tour that Dr. Süess has led, with logistics handled by Explorica. **James Nissen** (Humanities) led his Humanities 202 class (Art and Music in Western Civilization: Field Study - France) on a Jun. 4-12 trip, visiting cultural sites mostly in and around Paris. This was the 19<sup>th</sup> such tour that Dr. Nissen has led to Europe.

On Sat., Jun. 2, the Asian Student Cultural Association sponsored a concert of classical Indian as well as Bollywood-inspired music and dance in Kehrl Auditorium here on campus. The concert was supported by **Narendra Sheth**’s Geetmala Foundation of Michigan and featured the students of Koojun Music Academy, which is directed by **Rujuta Joshi**, an adjunct mathematics instructor at Schoolcraft. English Prof. **Anna Maheshwari** is faculty advisor for ASCA.

**Marianne E. Brandt**, an intercultural coach/consultant and a member of the Editorial Committee for this magazine, made a presentation on “Developing Awareness of Your Unconscious Bias” at a Jun. 28 conference, The Triple Bottom Line Forum: Business for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The conference, organized by the Southeast Michigan Sustainable Business Forum and held at Wayne State Univ. in Detroit, emphasized sustainability via the “triple bottom line” of people, planet, and profit. Marianne and her friend and co-presenter, **Haiyan (Grace) Zacharek** (Head of Procurement Strategy, Enablement, and Governance for Dow-DuPont Agriculture Division), taught the participants that in the increasingly global environment, successful and sustainable businesses must be culturally sensitive and avoid bias, stereotyping, and ethnocentrism. They discussed methods for creating an inclusive workforce and for developing the ability to be aware of one’s own unconscious biases. Marianne had been invited to speak at the conference after an organizer read her article, “Lessons from Working with International Students and Employees” (*International Agenda*, Winter 2017). •

# Students!



## Enter the Fall 2018 International Agenda Writing and Artwork Contest

First Prize: \$250 Scholarship  
Second Prize: \$150 Scholarship

...in each of the two categories, writing and artwork.

### Winners from Winter 2018

First Place, Writing: Miles Brown (see pp. 43-44)

First Place, Artwork: Eric Ealovega (see p. 6)

Second Place, Writing: Benita Adoghe (see pp. 35-36)

Second Place, Artwork: Alexionna Bushell (see p. 44).

Prize funds are provided by Schoolcraft's Office of Instruction.

**Submission Deadline: November 12, 2018**

### Guidelines:

1. Students (or their faculty mentors) may enter essays, research papers, persuasive writing, creative writing, poetry, or 2D or 3D artwork suitable for publication in *International Agenda*.
2. Works may deal with any topic of international or cross-cultural interest.
3. Submit a digital version of the writing or artwork as an e-mail attachment to the address below.
4. Submissions will be judged by a panel of faculty and staff volunteers based on content, originality, and aesthetics.
5. Entrants will be asked to sign a form affirming that the work is their own and permitting it to be used in the magazine.

For copies of the entry form and the complete set of rules, go to <http://www.schoolcraft.edu/scii/international-agenda> or else contact:

Randy Schwartz  
[rschwart@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:rschwart@schoolcraft.edu)  
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# Readers!



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This poster, “Warheads”, was created last Winter semester by Schoolcraft student Eric Ealovega of Canton, MI, as a class project in Computer Graphics Technology 226 (Digital Imaging 2 with Photoshop), taught by Prof. Michael Mehall. Eric is majoring in 3D Motion and Graphics and tells us, “My dream career is to design environments in video games.” He said that he designed his poster by focusing on the stark contrast between “innocence and the impact of nuclear war.”

## New at Our Neighboring Schools

Last year, **Washtenaw Community College** upgraded its international programming in several ways:

- It implemented a Global Endorsement program. A transcript indicates achievement of the endorsement if the student earns a required number of points through coursework, events, and activities.
- It initiated new study abroad trips, some of them interdisciplinary. Examples include a trip for anthropology and radiography students to study mummified remains in Peru; a trip for history and anthropology students to study historical sites and take part in archaeological digs in the United Kingdom; a trip for liberal arts and photography students to study culture and architecture in Spain; and a trip for business students to study the supply chain of coffee in Brazil.
- It signed a Memorandum of Understanding for partnerships with two schools in China: Liaoning Vocational College and Guidaojiaotong Polytechnic Institute.

The Confucius Institute at **Wayne State University** (CI-WSU) last December began piloting an online program in Mandarin Chinese with **J. E. Clark Preparatory Academy** on Detroit’s east side. Huilin Chen (also known as “Kay”), a visiting scholar with CI-WSU, oversaw the after-school program. Each Tuesday and Friday she offered a one-hour class to students in grades 3-8, supplementing her lessons with a series of videos produced by former CI-WSU staff members. After six months, students were able to count to 100; introduce themselves and their family members; recite and recognize dates, months, and years; and express desires, interests, and hobbies—all in Mandarin!

**Oakland University** organized a panel discussion last January, “Muslim and Civil Rights”, exploring challenges faced by the Arab American community and ways forward amid renewed critiques of multiculturalism. The event was spearheaded by OU Spanish Prof. Adolfo Campoy-Cubillo, who has researched the treatment of Muslims in Spain.

Among the notable books published recently:

- Tiya A. Miles (Instructor of American Culture, **University of Michigan**), *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (The New Press, 2017)
- Rochelle Riley (*Detroit Free Press* columnist), *The Burden: African Americans and the Enduring Impact of Slavery* (**Wayne State University Press**, 2018)
- Dunya Mikhail (Lecturer of Arabic, **Oakland University**), *The Beekeeper: Rescuing the Stolen Women of Iraq* (New Directions, 2018)
- Margrit Zinggeler (Prof. of German, **Eastern Michigan University**), *Swiss Maid: The Untold Story of Women's Contributions to Switzerland's Success* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2017)
- S. Martin Lindenauer (Prof. Emeritus of Surgery, **University of Michigan**) and Elizabeth Zibby Oneal (freelance writer), *Paralyzing Summer: The True Story of the Ann Arbor V.A. Hospital Poisonings and Deaths* (**University of Michigan Press**, 2016) on the famous 1970s case involving accused Filipina nurses. •



# R U READY 4 THE WORLD?

*In today's world, you can get a lot further if you're knowledgeable about other peoples, countries, and cultures. We asked a few successful people to write brief summaries of how international awareness has figured into their careers. Here's what they sent us...*

I grew up in a one-stoptown in Indiana, but while studying business at Indiana University, I did the study abroad program in Australia for six months. Since then I've traveled to every continent except Antarctica. In 2006 my wife and I moved to Liberia, which is where we developed passion and knowledge in community development. Living in a mud hut with no running water, we built a school, dug a well, and obtained a large donation of farm animals. In 2010 I started a nonprofit in Detroit called Life Remodeled. Every year we invest at least \$5 million in cash, labor, and materials into one city neighborhood at a time. We do three things: Remodel a community asset, repair owner-occupied homes, and mobilize 10,000 volunteers to beautify 300 city blocks in six days. The reason we exist is to bridge people across divides in order to help transform each other's lives.

— Chris Lambert, Founder and CEO of the Detroit nonprofit, Life Remodeled



After graduating from college in 2008 at UM, where I had minored in Japanese, I spent over a year in Toyama, Japan, teaching English to junior high school students. That was easily one of the best and most transformative decisions of my life. I learned to engage in cultural exchange— to embrace commonalities and shared experiences, to celebrate and be sensitive to cultural differences, and to resist judgment. My experience in Japan led me to a master's degree in the social foundations of education, where I focused on multicultural and international education. I have now visited 31 countries, and with each country, I learn more and more about others and myself. My travels not only inform the way I see the world, but also strengthen my problem-solving and critical thinking skills, interpersonal communication, awareness of self and others, and overall ability to adapt. I am forever changed, yet constantly changing. I haven't been everywhere, but it's on my list!

— La'Joya C. Orr, Managing Director of Recruitment and Admissions at Univ. of Michigan School of Kinesiology, and Owner, Founder and Seamstress of Le'Lionie Couture, custom clothing brand for women



I have traveled the world for both business and pleasure, but it's easier to travel when someone else pays, like an employer. Working in international companies has given me an appreciation for different cultures and languages. In my line of work, I have traveled to Canada, Mexico, South Africa, Sweden, Germany, Italy, and England, as well as many U.S. states. Because of my experiences, I wanted to give my own children an early start on their international relationships. Last school year, for the second time, we hosted an Education First (EF) High School Exchange Year student, this one from Spain. Our daughters keep in touch with both of the exchange students. With social media and apps like Skype and Facetime, the world is so much smaller than it used to be. Use technology, appreciate other cultures, respect others, and your career will soar.

— Carolyn Blaszkowski, Internal Auditor and Controller for the U.S. subsidiary of SKF Group, a Sweden-based global manufacturer

# Rich Traditions, Volatile Mixes:

In the “Little Senegal” neighborhood of Harlem, NY, men dressed in suits and bow-ties hawk Nation of Islam literature on the sidewalk in front of Muhammad Mosque No. 7 on W. 127<sup>th</sup> Street. On 126<sup>th</sup> Street begins the Orthodox Jewish *eruv*, a zone of Manhattan— marked 18 feet overhead with heavy-duty fishing line strung on city light poles— within which observant Jews are permitted to carry or push objects outside their homes from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday without violating the religious stricture against working on the Sabbath.

Similar scenes are visible in large cities all over the world. Due to soaring urbanization, never before in human history have so many people from so many divergent religious faiths lived among one another “cheek by jowl”. As is apparent in news headlines, these types of mixtures are both exciting and volatile.

*Eruv*, from a Hebrew word meaning “mixture”, is an urban area that symbolically extends the private domain of Jewish households into public areas, mixing the two together. On a world scale today, in the sphere of religion we have not only a mixture of different faiths but also a blurring together of the private, intimate domain of worship and the public, political domain of struggles for power and self-determination. But how did this come about? And how can people deal with such mixtures on a local and global level?

To help address such questions, during calendar year 2018 the Schoolcraft College International Institute (SCII) has been organizing a campus-wide focus on “Spirituality and Religion in Today’s World”. The project encourages people to learn about different faiths that they’ve perhaps never really encountered before; to appreciate the rich cultural heritage associated with them; and to grapple with the tensions resulting from their interaction with one another and with politics and culture.

## A Rich Heritage

The rich variety of spiritual and religious beliefs found on our planet is a direct reflection of the rich variety of human populations and cultures. That’s why the theme of this Focus Year provides a great way for people to learn about human diversity and tolerance. Virtually all forms of spiritual belief, even those not considered among the “Great World Religions”, have something for us to learn from if we delve into them honestly (see “West African Spirits, World-Class Literature” on page 38).

Such beliefs and practices are woven deep into the cultural fabric of every human civilization. Every person wants to know how his or her life might fit into a larger design, perhaps into an invisible moral order that guides the universe:

- On pp. 28-34 of this issue, art historian Hashim Al-Tawil (Henry Ford College) describes the experience of visiting cities like Palermo and Granada, the sensation of standing inside medieval Islamic buildings and feeling “magnificence, grandeur, beauty, protection, might, safety, happiness, victory, triumph, good health, well-being, beatitude, vivaciousness, permanence, good omen, and prosperity.”



Arushi Mudgal, an Odishi dancer, performing at the Drive East festival in New York last August. Odishi is a genre of Indian classical dance that expresses stories and spiritual ideas of Hinduism. It originated many centuries ago in the Hindu temples of Odisha, an eastern coastal state of India. Photo by Andrea Mohin, *The New York Times* (Aug. 15, 2018).

- In “Finding Sikhism: My Journey toward the Eternal Guru” (pp. 12-14, 36), Veronica Sidhu writes that she left a Catholic convent when she found a more “personal and intimate, dogma-free path to reach God” in the Sikh religion.
- Native-Detroit psychotherapist Eric Wilkins explains (p. 17) that he uses Zen Buddhist meditation in the treatment of addicts and other patients who need help “in regaining faith in one’s own inner resources for courageously facing life’s tempestuous challenges.”

As recently as a few generations ago, people were “born into” a religion— and almost certainly stuck with it their whole lives. But today, modernizing and urbanizing trends are beginning to convert religions into “lifestyle choices” that an individual may select, at any point in life, from a menu that also includes plenty of non-religious philosophies.



# Spirituality and Religion in Today's World

## Religion and Nationalism, a Volatile Mix

The modern national state took shape in the 1700s, with nationalism as its guiding ideology. More and more, the nationalists used religion as a point of reference in defining “our nation” and distinguishing it from “the others”.

The mixture of religion and nationalism immeasurably strengthened both of them. True believers had the power of an expansive state to back them, and people’s sense of “my nation” could acquire the aura of divine favor, as well as the fervor and exclusivity of moral rectitude:

- In the 1800s, Americans charged westward across the continent to seize land that had been used for millennia by native people, whose “spiritual beliefs were called ‘pagan’, ‘devil worship’, and other terms that served to instill a sense of loathing for their own cultural values” writes Schoolcraft anthropologist Cynthia Jenzen in her book review on pages 21-22.
- In “Sarah’s Story” (pp. 18-20, 22), his family memoir about the Armenian Genocide, journalist Robert Ourlian notes that when Turkey’s Ottoman rulers suffered huge early losses in World War 1, anger and suspicion were directed at Armenian Christian minorities. In April 1915, massacres and pogroms against the Armenians erupted across the empire.

Religions were not only empowered by nationalism; they were often substantially reshaped by it. An interesting example occurred in India. Early Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains had often eaten meat when they could afford it (see Dwijendra Narayan Jha, *The Myth of the Holy Cow* [New York: Verso, 2002]). But in the Middle Ages, many Hindu authorities began to question the killing of cows and other animals based on *ahimsā*, the principle of compassion and non-injury toward living creatures. When India was increasingly subjected to Western penetration, these

moral reservations about meat-eating became elevated and institutionalized as a symbol of national identity, a way of sharply distinguishing Hindu people and culture from that of the West. Especially in southern and western India, non-vegetarian eating came to be seen as unclean and was associated with the lower castes and with outcasts. In Gujarat, a state on the west coast of India, vegetarianism became the defining cultural characteristic and one that is still a focus of Hindu nationalist agitation (see Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2012]).

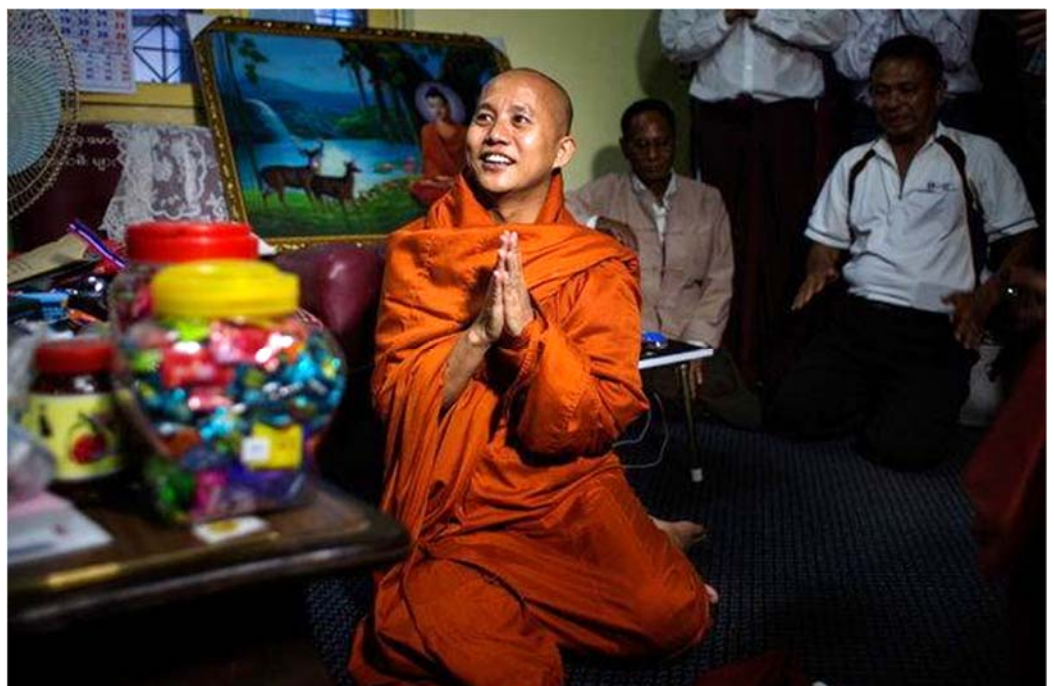
As globalization brings the world’s peoples ever more tightly together— without erasing the national boundaries between them— nations and religions are struggling to redefine their relationship toward each other. Many of today’s headlines can be understood in that context. A few examples from this past Summer:

- In Denmark, where 48% of the population are self-declared atheists but Lutheranism is officially established (i.e., government-supported) as the Church of Denmark, the immigration minister wrote a May 21 newspaper column arguing that the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan is “a danger to all of us” and that Muslims who fast should stay home from work “to avoid negative consequences for the rest of Danish society”; on May 31, parliament enacted a ban on face veils, effectively outlawing the *burqa* and *niqab* worn by some Muslim women; and on Jun. 1, a citizens’ petition forced parliament to consider banning circumcision of boys, a practice traditional in Islam and Judaism (and which the WHO says reduces the risk of HIV transmission).
- In traditionally Roman Catholic Ireland, a referendum on May 26 approved amending the constitution to legalize abortion, and on Jun. 12 the justice minister scheduled a

*continued on next page*

Ashin Wirathu, an ultranationalist Buddhist monk in Myanmar who was barred from public preaching, turned instead to Facebook. He used it to spread hoaxes that have incited riots and violence against the Rohingya Muslims, an oppressed minority facing extermination in the country.

Photo:  
Adam Dean, *New York Times* (Aug. 9, 2018).



**Focus Theme***continued from page 9*

similar October referendum to consider the constitution's ban on "blasphemy"; on May 30, the government officially apologized for its history of coercing adoptions of babies from unwed mothers, and on Jun. 5 it held a conference for 220 survivors of the notorious "Magdalene Laundries", a system of Church-run, profit-making orphanages and industrial schools where unwed mothers and abused children were sent; on Jul. 10, the parliament passed a bill barring elementary schools from preferentially admitting children who are baptized.

Students and others need to learn about such developments because they hold important lessons concerning religious, nationalist, and other trends that are shaping everyone's future.

**How You Can Participate**

Faculty, students, and other readers can participate in this Focus project in a variety of ways.

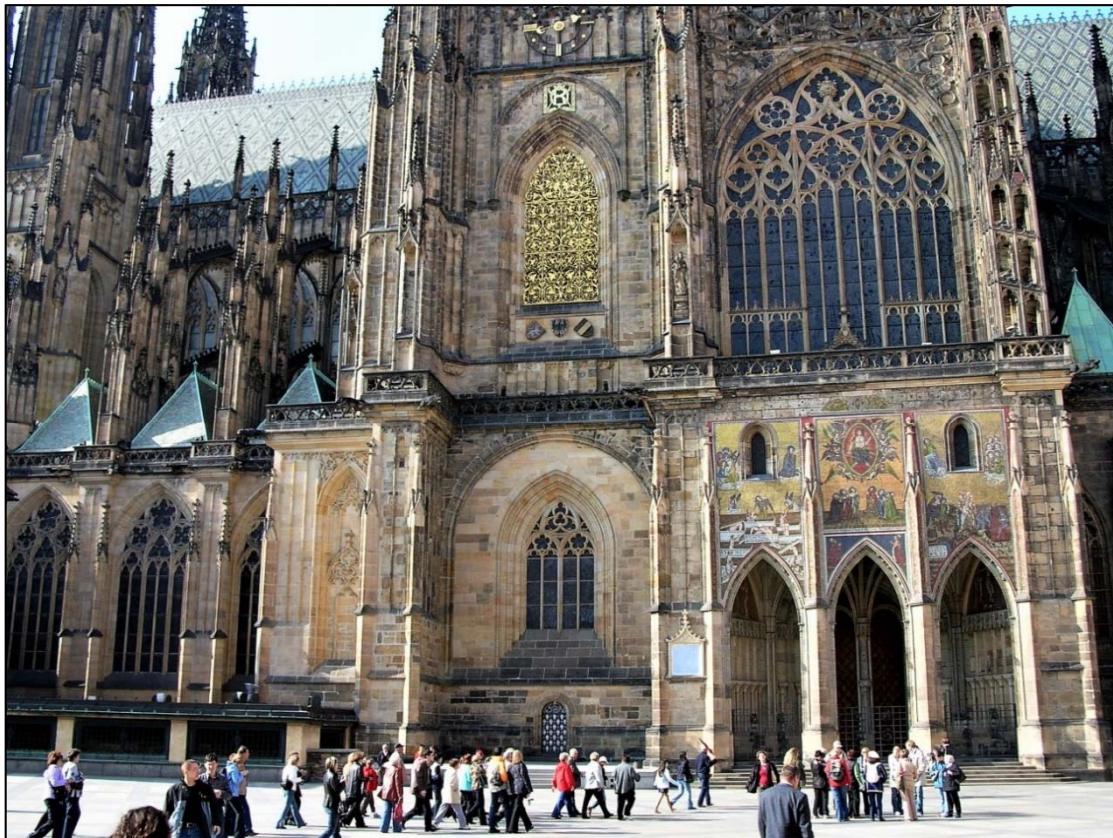
Instructors can integrate relevant topics directly into coursework and campus programming by developing presentations, course readings and assignments, or student projects. Use the concepts and resources contained in this and the previous issue of the magazine as a jumping-off point. With a little creativity, instructors in many disciplines can participate fully.

SCII Faculty Co-Chair Helen Dituras has played the lead role in organizing a free, year-long speaker series on the Schoolcraft College campus for students, staff, and the general public. The series resumes this Fall:

- Sep. 13, 2018 (12-1:30 pm, room VT-550): "Hidden in the Shadows", a panel presentation about human trafficking, will feature members of the Pearls of Great

Price Coalition (a local Christian alliance working to prevent human trafficking through public awareness, education, and action steps that anyone can take), along with a sex trafficking survivor, members of Night Angels street ministry, and the local music group Lost Voices.

- Sep. 25, 2018 (12-1:30 pm, room F-530): Kimberly Oliver (Instructor of Anthropology, Wayne State Univ.) presents "African Spirituality Across the Atlantic", focusing on Voodoo in New Orleans and other instances of ecstatic spirituality produced in syncretic form from African and Circum-Caribbean traditions.
- Sep. 28, 2018 (10-11:30 am, room LA-200): "Spirituality and Student Development", by Debra Harmening (Prof. of Education, Univ. of Toledo), delves into why spirituality is important to students and their development and provides interactive activities for students and audience members to explore.
- Oct. 4, 2018 (6-7:30 pm, room VT-550): "Meditation and Prayer: The Brief Science of Spiritual Experience", by Jeff Dykhuizen (Prof. of Psychology and Chair of Global Peace Studies program, Delta College), explores why humans are driven to seek out transcendent experiences like prayer, meditation, and yoga, and how culture shapes the meaning we construct from our experiences. A comparison of brain activity during meditation and prayer—and outcomes of these practices—will be included.
- Oct. 26, 2018 (10 am – 12, Lower Waterman): Katherine Rowell (Prof. of Sociology and Anthropology, Sinclair Community College) uses an interactive presentation to unveil Janet Bear McTavish's exhibit, "Quilting the Golden Rule". On loan from the Dayton International Peace Museum, the exhibit is a series of 16 quilts, displayed in a walk-through labyrinth format, that center



St. Vitus Cathedral, a massive, Gothic-style Roman Catholic church in Prague, is the largest and most important church in the Czech Republic. Built in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, it contains the tombs of many Bohemian kings and Holy Roman Emperors.

Photo:  
Schoolcraft College  
Emeritus Prof.  
of English  
Gordon L. Wilson,  
2005



around the teachings of the Golden Rule in various world faiths and humanist philosophies.

- Nov. 1, 2018 (12-1 pm, room F-530): Rachel O'Neill, founder of Little Dresses for Africa (see article on p. 37).

These annual Focus Presentation Series have been hugely educational and popular, helping to spread global awareness on campus and in the surrounding communities. For example, about 80 people attended the presentation last Jan. 30 on "Islam and the *Hijab*", given by Dr. Ibrahim Kazerooni, Imam of the Islamic Center of America (Dearborn, MI) and adjunct instructor at the Univ. of Detroit Mercy. The entire faculty is urged to recommend this series to students as an excellent way to gather insight and information. Some instructors might want to bring a whole class to a given event in the Focus Series; contact Helen Ditoura at 734-462-7263 or by e-mail at [hditoura@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:hditoura@schoolcraft.edu). Others might want to fold these into extra-credit opportunities for selected students.

The sidebar at right, "Other Local Events on This Theme", lists a half-dozen relevant off-campus events in our area this Fall.

To supplement these events and the articles in this magazine, you can extend your learning using materials from the Bradner and Radcliff Libraries on our campus:

- The library staff can help you locate a wide variety of books, videos, and other resources.
- For online hunting, you might want to start with Schoolcraft's Library Guides: visit <http://libguides.schoolcraft.edu> and click on "Humanities".

If you have relevant expertise or experience, offer to write an article for this magazine or to be part of our speaker series.

Let us know how you and your colleagues bring some global and multicultural perspective into your coursework this year! •

## Global Health is 2019 Theme

At the May 4 meeting of the International Institute, we selected our new focus theme for calendar year 2019: "Exploring Physical and Mental Health Issues in a Global Environment". The theme encourages a broad exploration of factors affecting health in regions around the world, including the impact of diet, hunger, exercise, and sports in various cultures; behavioral issues that affect public health; the effect of nationality, class, gender, and urban/rural status on the incidence and treatment of depression, suicide, and other psychologies; the roles played by economics, politics, and race in the delivery of medical care; the importance of cultural awareness among health professionals; global health effects of climate change, environmental pollution, and war; women's health and reproductive health; maternal, neonatal, and infant mortality; the battle to control infectious diseases in diverse ecosystems; the danger of pandemics; the work of national and international medical organizations, foundations, and NGOs; and the status of traditional medicine.

Ideas and volunteers for writing or speaking on aspects of this theme are welcome. Put on your thinking caps and make a suggestion!

## Other Local Events on This Theme

May 12 - Sep. 30, 2018: "The *Mihrab*: Portraits of Arab Muslim Women". Saudi-American artist Hend Al-Mansour's series of portraits of three Arab Muslim women from Minnesota uses the *mihrab* (the architectural prayer niche found in mosques) as a framework for exploring their relationship with Islam. Main Floor Gallery, Arab American National Museum, 13624 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. For more info, call 313-582-2266 or see <http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org>.

Jul. 13, 2018 – Feb. 2019: "Music and Saints: The Art of Jerome Wright". Wright, a prolific artist, musician, and dancer who works primarily in oil pastels, captures spirituality in various forms— from religious worship to music— in these 19 dynamic new works that show Black faces as the embodiment of saints. Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-494-5800 or see <http://www.chwmuseum.org>.

Oct. 12 – Nov. 11, 2018: "*Ofrendas*: Celebrating *el Día de Muertos*". A community exhibit of *ofrenda* altars for the Day of the Dead, as celebrated in Mexico and other Latin countries. These elaborate displays honoring lost loved ones typically include offerings of *pan de muerto* (bread of the dead), *calaveras* (sugar skulls), *papeles picados* (paper cutouts), candles, flowers, pictures and mementos, and favorite foods and drinks. Featuring a *mariachi* concert on Oct. 12, *calaveras*-making workshops on Oct. 18 and 26-28, and an Aztek *ofrenda*-making workshop on Oct. 27. Co-sponsored by Detroit's Mexican Consulate. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-833-7900 or see <https://www.dia.org/events>.

Oct. 18, 2018: Dr. Melissa Forstrom (Purchase College, State Univ. of New York), "International Interpretative Approaches to the Exhibition of Islamic Art". Often, Islamic art exhibits are discussed using language that suggests alternative narratives exist: they "tell another story" of Islam, "bridge cultural divides" and "combat" negative media narratives. By examining five Islamic art reinstallations, this presentation asks: Do alternative stories exist in these exhibits, and if so, can we specify where? 6:30 - 7:30 pm. Lecture Hall, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-833-7900 or see <https://www.dia.org/events>.

Nov. 17, 2018: Soweto Gospel Choir. Performing since 2002, "South Africa's Most Heavenly Voices" draw on the best talent from churches and communities in and around Soweto, expressing a powerful spiritual message through rhythm, movement, and soul. 7:30 pm. Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, 44575 Garfield Rd., Clinton Twp. For info and tickets, call 586-286-2141.

Dec. 22, 2018: "Amahl and the Night Visitors". A new production of this family holiday classic, a one-act, one-hour opera about an encounter between a boy with a lame leg and the Three Kings in Bethlehem, suggesting how faith, charity, and love can work miracles. Sung in English; music and libretto by Gian Carlo Menotti. 2:30 pm and 7:30 pm. Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, 44575 Garfield Rd., Clinton Twp. For info and tickets, call 313-237-7464 or see <http://www.motopera.org>.



# Finding Sikhism: My Journey Toward the Eternal Guru

by Veronica Sidhu

*"Rani" Sidhu of Scotch Plains, NJ, was born Veronica Vajda and grew up in a family of Catholic and Central European heritage in Livonia, MI. She is retired now following more than 20 years as a high school guidance counselor and director, but she continues to teach religion and history for the Garden State Sikh Association. To raise money for scholarships she has also taught Punjabi cooking, a practice that led to a well-received cookbook and memoir, Menus and Memories from Punjab: Meals to Nourish Body and Soul (Hippocrene, 2009, 2019).*

The gift of a long life is the opportunity to contemplate its arc. As an adolescent in Livonia in the early 1950s, I would attend to my chores on Saturday morning and then jump on my bike to take a long, solitary, and circuitous ride. Most of the time it was to pass by the house of a boy that I liked (I never saw him once!). But I enjoyed the time, leaving the bike and crossing a stream or kicking over logs to see the life underneath. Mainly, though, it was a time to think. I remember making a vow to learn something new every day. I also thought about how my life would unfold. I thought, "Now I am a student; later, I will probably marry and have children; then I will grow old and die. What is life really about?"

My parents, with great sacrifice, had made sure that I would receive an education in Catholic schools. I was quite devout, although a typical kid in every other way. I decided that devoting myself to God and service to humanity was the best way to use this life, so at age 14 I joined the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit in Techny, IL.

Despite its very strict regulation, I loved life in the convent. We spoke only at meals and at the hour or so of recreation in the evening. We prayed and studied and had our chores. The Sisters Servants was a missionary order of exceptional, very saintly women. I was blessed to be among them for four years. Try as I might, however, I could not believe that there was "no salvation outside the Catholic church", a teaching in those days. How could a loving God bar any sincere person from meeting Him? I realized much later that this core belief—that in all human beings lives the One Creator—began a process of opening me to God's grace, drawing me into the wider embrace of Sikhism, a religion that I did not know existed until I met the man who would become my husband. How this happened is a small miracle.

## Marrying a Sikh

When I was preparing to leave my family for the last time for a life in the convent, I received a telegram from Rome stating that I could not enter because of a prior back injury. I was devastated, and worked for over a year to condition myself to be able to return.

I succeeded, and it was on the day that I had all of my papers ready that I met my future husband. I literally heard a

voice that said, "You must marry this man!" In August I followed him to the Univ. of Michigan where he was getting his master's degree in engineering, and I was admitted to UM that same month. He was an only child, and eventually asked his widowed mother in Punjab, India, for permission for us to marry, and she granted it.

After completing our studies at UM we left for Punjab—permanently, we thought then. Slowly my apprenticeship as a Punjabi began. I wanted to learn all that I could about the culture and traditions. But my husband got no job offers in India, and six months later we moved with his mother to New Jersey, where her brother and his family had just migrated. My husband was able to land a good job there immediately. We all lived in the same apartment building for a few years, and then bought homes within walking distance of each other.

## Learning about the Faith

Rising before dawn to shower and pray, my mother-in-law's devotion and discipline in her faith made me curious about her prayers. I was gifted with an English translation and transliteration of the Sikh holy book of hymns, the *Guru Granth Sahib* (Respected Word of God). I was immediately captivated by the resonance with my own understanding of God. No other prayers had captured that, nor explained the personal and intimate, dogma-free path to reach God.

The first prayer in the book is the only one not set to music:

*Ek Ongkar:* There is One Creator (People have given different names to this supreme power, but there is only ONE)

*Satnaam:* True Name (God's existence is True. God's existence was truth, is truth, and always will be truth)

*Karta-Purakh:* The Creator of the Universe exists in creation (in each and every part and being of the universe)

*Nirbhau:* Fearless

*Nirvair:* Without hate

*Akal-Murat:* Timeless/Immortal

*Ajuni:* Beyond births and deaths

*Saibhang:* Self-illuminated.

As our family grew, so did the Sikh community around us and so did my own understanding of the faith and my commitment to it. It became apparent that our community needed a place for communal worship. At first we met in the Knights of Columbus hall in our town, but soon we bought our own building and established it as the first Sikh *gurdwara* (temple) in New Jersey.

When my husband's cousin gifted me with the first set of children's books on the lives of the 10 Sikh *gurus*, a whole new level of understanding opened up for me. Three of us formed the first Khalsa School in the state. Auntie Surindra taught preschool, Surinder Kaur Puar taught the Punjabi language and *shabad kirtan* (hymns), and I taught Sikh history and religion.



Rani Sidhu in the late 1960s at the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), a Sikh *gurdwara* located in Amritsar, Punjab, India. The most important pilgrimage site of Sikhism, the temple is built around a *sarovar* (pool) completed by Guru Ram Das in 1577. Over the centuries it has had to be repeatedly repaired or rebuilt because of persecution, most recently in 1984 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sent the army on a bloody assault.

### Guru Nanak, the Founder of Sikhism

Just as my life had an arc, I could see that the Sikh religion has one, too. There was not just one teacher or *guru*, but 10 of them, spanning over 200 years.

The first, Guru Nanak Dev ji, was truly enlightened from an early age. Born in Punjab, India, in 1469, he was fluent in Punjabi, Farsi, Urdu, and Sanskrit. Although born into a Hindu family in a village with a Muslim headman (who later became one of his first followers), he eschewed rituals and dogma. He learned both from Brahmins (the priestly class of Hindus) and from Sufis (adherents of Sufism, an ascetic and mystical trend within Islam). He was gifted in mathematics and became the treasurer of the governor, later marrying and having two children. At one point he disappeared for three days and when he was found, his first words were, “There is no Hindu, no Muslim!” These words caused an uproar, as you can imagine, but by them Nanak meant— as he made clear in his wonderful prayer, the *Japji Sahib*— that the various spiritual realms all interconnect. In the highest, the Realm of Truth or *Sach Khand*, there are no forms, therefore no distinctions of religion. There is only oneness with the Creator.

Nanak became a *guru*, which is a Hindi and Punjabi word meaning “enlightened teacher” (when the word is capitalized and unmodified, it refers to God). Guru Nanak traveled by foot on long journeys that took him to Western China, Bengal, Mecca, Uzbekistan, and Sri Lanka, all the while singing beautiful hymns in the vernacular language accompanied by his Muslim-born *rehab* player, Mardana. He wore a patched coat

like a Sufi, wooden sandals like a Buddhist, and a turban and saffron mark like a Hindu. “Who and what are you?” was a common question as people approached him. He then preached a very simple way of life: *Naam Japna* (remember God), *Kirt Karna* (earn an honest living by your own hands), and *Wand Chakna* (share with the less fortunate). Any sincere person, in any time or place, no matter the culture or religion they were born into, can live such a life.

Guru Nanak taught that the process of turning toward God and away from the five enemies— *kam* (lust/desire), *krodh* (anger), *lobh* (greed), *moh* (attachment), and *ahankar* (ego)— is a daily, ongoing process, the process of transformation to a virtuous and enlightened existence. Joining the *Saad Sangat*, a community of like-minded souls, can help us toward the goal of becoming one with our One Creator. Singing hymns of praise in the congregation and tuning in to the Divine Presence, *simran*, he said, are the two most important methods to elevate our souls and transform our lives into harmony with the Divine Will. Our own egoistic and non-virtuous actions in our present and past lives have had consequences that cause us pain and suffering. He met with the full complement of humanity— from saints and *yogis* to an emperor, murderers, and cannibals. He spoke to each in language that they would understand. Remarkable transformations took place.

For this era, Guru Nanak believed, the most efficacious path to reach God is through family life and working in the community in an honorable way, doing service and remember-

*continued on next page*

## Finding Sikhism *continued from page 13*

ing God. Toward the end of his life, he returned to his fields to farm and form a community of like-minded souls who worked, prayed, and did service together. He knew that his mission was not complete, and transferred the inspirational energy to a successor whom he named *Angad Dev* (“limbs that serve God”, i.e., an extension of divine will).

Guru Angad Dev was tasked, even before Nanak died, to begin a new community at a distance from the first. It was he who developed the Punjabi alphabet (*gurmukhi*) in order to record hymns in the vernacular Punjabi tongue, so that everyone in the region could understand them. He began the first school for children’s religious and physical education, and started a free community kitchen (*langar*), where anyone can come and sit on a floor together with others to eat a simple, vegetarian meal. This egalitarian tradition is still practiced throughout the world in every Sikh *gurdwara*. (The Sikhs of D.C. have even instituted a yearly “Langar on the Hill” for Congressional members and staff.)

### Goals of Humility, Justice, and Equality

Each of the subsequent *gurus* left his own unique imprint on his times and circumstances. One was a healer, one an environmentalist, one a builder. Many were poets and musicians. Two were martyred. One, the ninth, transferred the guruship to his son, Gobind Rai, before offering his own life to save the Brahmins of Kashmir from persecution: on the orders of the Mughal emperor, he was publicly beheaded in 1675 for refusing to convert to Islam. Today, the spot is marked by the *Sis Ganj gurdwara* in the Chandni Chowk market district of Delhi.

Under the young, charismatic son, Gobind Rai, the number of Sikh followers swelled to many thousands. Persecutions by the emperor and governors became even more draconian. After more attempts to appease, Guru Gobind Rai, in the Spring

festival (Baisakhi) of 1699, before a huge crowd, asked for the head of a devotee. According to the account, only one man stood up. He was led into a tent. The guru asked four more times, and each time a man stood up and was taken into the tent. The crowd was terrified. Then they all came out of the tent dressed in what would become the signature garb of the baptized Sikh man: a turban to cover unshorn hair (*kes*), symbolizing a man in harmony with nature and divine will; a comb (*kanga*), symbolizing order and discipline; loose, long shorts (*kuch*), symbolizing modesty; a steel bracelet (*kada*), symbolizing eternity and a reminder to do good; and a sheathed dagger (*kirpan*), symbolizing commitment to justice.

These five followers were then ceremonially baptized into the Order of the Khalsa, the Pure Ones, with the drinking of a blessed, sweetened water called *amrit*. The *guru* himself then humbly turned to these Five Beloveds and was similarly baptized by them. All of the Sikh followers changed their caste names from the traditional ones into simply Singh (“lion”) for the men and Kaur (“princess”) for the women, so that one of the missions of Guru Nanak, the total equality of humankind, could be put into practice. This egalitarian ideal was extremely threatening to the ruling powers, whether Hindu, Muslim, or secular, and all kinds of discrimination and terror were unleashed upon the Sikhs.

From the beginning, the *gurus* respected women as equals who took important roles in the community according to their gifts. There were women preachers, organizers, teachers, and eventually even soldiers and generals. All people, no matter their caste or economic status, were seated on the ground in rows for the simple meal together. This included the emperor when he visited the second *guru*. The fifth *guru*, Arjan Dev ji, a great poet himself, compiled a book of all of the hymns of the *gurus* to date, along with those of enlightened Muslim and Hindu saints who also worshipped the One Creator in divine ecstasy.

*continued on page 36*



The Bangla Sahib is a prominent Sikh *gurdwara* in Delhi, India. Famous for its golden dome, it is associated with the eighth *guru*, Har Krishan, who died of smallpox at age 7 in the year 1664.

Photo:  
Schoolcraft College  
Emeritus Prof.  
of English  
Gordon L. Wilson,  
2012



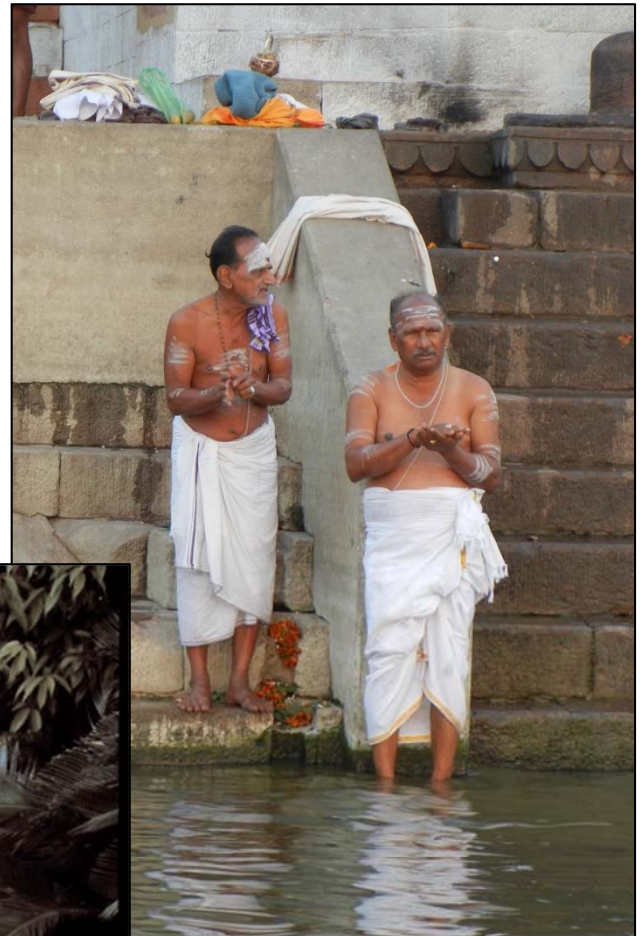
# Religions of Asia

The vast majority of the world's people are followers of one or another of the religions that first arose in the Asian continent. Some examples are Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Bahá'í, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Cao Dai, and Tenrikyo.

At right: For Hindus, the Ganges river is sacred and purifying. They ritually bathe in it, and cup its waters in their hands. In mythology and ancient writings, it is the symbol of all sacred waters. Since the river is thought to have descended to earth from heaven, it is believed to also be the vehicle of ascent back to heaven: after one dies, one can achieve salvation if one's ashes are immersed in the Ganges.

Below: The Buddhist faithful often leave offerings at a statue of Nichiren (1222-1282), a priest who founded one of the main branches of Japanese Buddhism. It is located at the Chōshō-ji temple in Kamakura, a city in Kanagawa prefecture, Japan.

Photos by Schoolcraft College Emeritus Prof. of English Gordon L. Wilson, from 2012 and 1986, respectively.



The Byodo-In Temple at its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is depicted on the new U.S. Priority Mail® postage stamp, issued on Jan. 21, 2018. Located in Valley of the Temples Memorial Park on the island of O'ahu in Hawai'i, it is a non-denominational temple built in 1968 to mark the centennial of the first Japanese immigration to the islands. It is a replica of Byōdō-in, a Mahayana Buddhist temple in the city of Uji, Kyoto prefecture, Japan, which was established in 1052 as a tribute to Amida, a Buddha who represents infinite light and infinite life.





# Bertolt Brecht on the Limitations of Virtuous Thinking

A German artist with materialist convictions, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) frequently used his poems and plays to teach that people's yearnings for a better world will remain only dreams if the yearnings are disconnected from the here and now. Good deeds of individuals can only go so far if most of humanity lives in a state of deprivation, and especially if there are chasms of wealth and poverty. Religion and other forms of virtuous thinking cannot by themselves change material conditions; in fact, Brecht argued, it's more the opposite: only when economic and social divisions are thoroughly uprooted will altruism be possible on a mass scale.

The lines here are from the First Finale that closes Act 1 of Brecht's play, "The Threepenny Opera". They are spoken by the character Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum, a businessman who controls the entire syndicate of street beggars in London. The translation from the German original is by Eric Bentley for the Grove Press edition of the play.

## Über die Unsicherheit Menschlicher Verhältnisse

Das Recht des Menschen ist's auf dieser Erden,  
da er doch nur kurz lebt, glücklich zu sein,  
teilhaftig aller Lust der Welt zu werden,  
zum Essen Brot zu kriegen und nicht einen Stein.  
Das ist des Menschen nacktes Recht auf Erden,  
doch leider hat man bisher nie vernommen,  
dass etwas recht war und dann war's auch so!  
Wer hätte nicht gern einmal Recht bekommen?  
Doch die Verhältnisse, sie sind nicht so.

Ein guter Mensch sein! Ja, wer wär's nicht gern?  
Sein Gut den Armen geben? Warum nicht?  
Wenn alle gut sind, ist Sein Reich nicht fern.  
Wer säße nicht sehr gern in Seinem Licht?  
Ein guter Mensch sein? Ja, wer wär's nicht gern?  
Doch leider sind auf diesem Sterne eben  
die Mittel kärglich und die Menschen roh.  
Wer möchte nicht in Fried'n und Eintracht leben?  
Doch die Verhältnisse, sie sind nicht so!

## On the Uncertainty of Human Circumstances

The right to happiness is fundamental:  
Men live so little time and die alone.  
Nor is it altogether incidental  
That they want bread to eat and not a stone.  
The right to happiness is fundamental.  
And yet how great would be the innovation  
Should someone claim and get that right — hooray!  
The thought appeals to my imagination!  
But this old world of ours ain't built that way.

To be a good man — what a nice idea!  
And give the poor your money? That is fine!  
When all mankind is good, His Kingdom's near!  
Who would not like to bask in Light Divine?  
To be a good man — what a nice idea!  
But there's the little problem of subsistence:  
Supplies are scarce and human beings base.  
Who would not like a peaceable existence?  
But this old world is not that kind of place.



Photo by John Hill from Sarahan, northern India, 2010, via Wikimedia Commons

# Zen Buddhist Meditation in Psychotherapy

by Eric L. Wilkins

*Eric L. Wilkins is a social work clinical therapist at Transformational Choices Holistic Therapy (9409 Haggerty Road, Plymouth, MI), which offers mental health counseling and relationship therapy for individuals, groups, families, and children. He also serves as a behavioral health therapist at American Indian Health and Family Services (Southwest Detroit). Eric graduated from Cass Tech High School in downtown Detroit in 1977 with a concentration in business administration and management. He lived in San Diego, CA, for nearly 30 years before returning to Michigan.*



Photo: Transformational Choices

I feel quite fortunate in having discovered that I can share meditation with many of my psychotherapy clients as part of an effective method of treatment. I personally practice Zen Buddhist meditation twice daily on most days. But early on, I never imagined that it would be possible to apply such meditation to a professional setting.

In 2011, I had returned to college seeking an associate's degree at Wayne County Community College District. Shortly thereafter, I began attending Sunday services at the Still Point Zen Buddhist Temple (<http://stillpointzenbuddhisttemple.org>), which is located on Trumbull Avenue in the Detroit midtown area. By 2015, I had concluded a three-year seminary training at Still Point Zen and was ordained as a One Sangha Instructor. The following year, I finished a master's degree in social work from nearby Wayne State University, with an emphasis on cognitive behavioral therapy.

One day our Guiding Teacher at Still Point, Koho Vince Anila, came across a flyer advertising a lecture on mindfulness meditation for substance abuse, and he shared it with me knowing my career goals. That flyer, and the consequent realization that I could share the deeply self-empowering benefits of meditation as a clinical therapist, was like a golden new dawn for me.

Mindfulness meditation is related to Buddhism, other eastern religions, as well as western religions where self-contemplation is prevalent. Buddhism originated when Siddhārtha Gautama, a wealthy young prince in India sometime around 400 BCE, became disenchanted with his lavish life of excess. Leaving family and comfort behind, he wandered and met various spiritual teachers on his quest to understand human suffering and discover liberation.

During a period of ascetic practice, Siddhārtha gained the insight that extreme self-denial was counterproductive to his spiritual quest. Barely eating, he had nearly died from starvation. After regaining his physical strength, thanks to the kindness of a young maiden noting his distress, he ended his fast and, while sitting in deep meditation, embarked on what is now called The Middle Way between excess and extreme self-denial.

Meditation, a way to establish oneself in the present non-judgmental moment as it unfolds, is the connection between Buddhism and the modern mindfulness meditation movement. "Buddha" is the term not only for Siddhārtha but also for any other person who has attained full enlightenment. Siddhārtha's followers have created the tradition of following his path to insight, acceptance, and balance: Buddhism, an awakening to this precious life of ours.

Many of my clients to whom I introduce mindfulness meditation tell me that they did not quite understand how meditation might help them, but later on they are profoundly grateful that their intuition led them to give it a chance. They report real change in a meaningful way that is steeped in self-compassion and regaining faith in one's own inner resources for courageously facing life's tempestuous challenges.



# Sarah's Story

## A Family Flees the Armenian Genocide

photographs by Michelle Andonian; text by Robert K. Ourlian

*With permission from Michelle Andonian and Robert Ourlian, who are cousins of one another, we have excerpted the material below from their book, This Picture I Gift: An Armenian Memoir (Veduta Books, 2015; distributed by Wayne State Univ. Press). The book reconstructs the life of their grandmother, Sarah Andonian (born Sarah Temigian), who at age 9, along with surviving family members, fled the genocide in Armenia, and seven years later emigrated from Turkey to the U.S., settling in southwest Detroit. The book revisits and explores lost historical lands and landmarks, bringing them together with present-day life in Turkey and Armenia.*

*Michelle Andonian is a lifelong Detroit, a graduate of the College for Creative Studies, and an award-winning photographer, producer, and director. She does freelance editorial, commercial, and corporate photography through her business, Michelle Andonian Photography, located beside the Eastern Market. She spent a decade photographing children's philanthropic programs around the world, and began her career at The Detroit News, where in the 1980s she was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for a month-long assignment in Israel revealing the similarities between the Jews and Palestinians there.*

*Bob Ourlian is currently the National Security Editor for The Wall Street Journal, and is based in Washington, DC. Prior to that he was Foreign Policy Editor at Tribune Media Services, and wrote about federal issues for The Atlantic, The Congress Daily, Government Executive, and other publications. After studying journalism at Michigan State Univ., in the 1980s and 1990s Bob worked as a reporter with The Jackson [MS] Clarion-Ledger, The Detroit News, The Orlando Sentinel, and The Los Angeles Times. He was co-winner of a George Polk Award in 1990 for a series linking Detroit's urban decline to the political connections of landlords, contractors, and real estate agents.*

This synopsis begins more than 100 years ago. Sarah Temigian was born, in all likelihood, on Oct. 20, 1905, although there still is some question as to the precise year. Her family lived in Ishkhan, a small village across the Halys River from the city of Sivas in what was then Ottoman-run Turkey. Sivas was known to the Armenians as *Sepastia*, and the city served as the center of a large province of the same name. Armenians who come from the province of Sepastia are known as *Sepastatsis*.

Sivas was one of six main Armenian provinces, or *vilayets* as they were called in Turkish, in the Ottoman Empire (the other Armenian vilayets being Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, and Harput). There were Armenians elsewhere in Turkey, too, of course. This all formed an expanse that many Armenians and people throughout the world simply called, "Armenia".

By 1905, Armenians had been in this area for at least 2,500 years. They occupied larger or smaller areas within the region, depending on their leaders' ambitions and on the expansion and contraction of other empires in the region at the time, such as the Romans or the Byzantines. Armenia, at its peak size under Tigranes the Great during the First Century BC, stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Caspian Sea—most of present-day Turkey. When religious leader Gregory the Illuminator succeeded in making Armenia the world's first Christian state in 301 AD, the Armenian empire still occupied a major footprint in Asia Minor, as the general area also is known.

Across Sivas, neighboring Erzurum, and the other Armenian provinces, land elevations averaged 4,000-5,000 feet, several times higher than the average in the eastern U.S., making for a plateau that many call the Armenian Highlands. And in that nation, which is what it really was, there were 2 million Armenians, who lived among Turks, Kurds, Greeks, Assyrians, Yazidis, and others. Just within Sivas province, historians calculate that there were between 165,000 and 204,000 Armenians. They lived in 240 villages and had about 200 churches, 200 schools in Sepastia, scholars like Raymond Kevorkian determined.

One of those villages was Ishkhan, which means "prince" in Armenian. And one of those Armenians was Sarah, who was the daughter of Bobbe and Mary Temigian. Around 1913, the Temigians had a boy, Nishan. They worked hard, living off of the agricultural economy. Bobbe Temigian's grandfather owned land, and Bobbe tended sheep and livestock on the family acreage, spending long hours. Sarah's mother worked in the fields at times as well, leaving the children with grandparents. The soil was rich, but Sepastia was arid, making for a grassy, relatively tree-less landscape, dotted with mountains, oxen, and sheep. Sarah had close relatives in Ishkhan, including her Auntie Miriam, her father's sister, and her Uncle Oskian, who was a teacher and sang in the church nearby.

From Ishkhan, they could walk to the bigger city, Sivas, a few miles away, likely by using an ancient arched bridge across the Halys River, which is called the *Aghis* (salt) River by Armenians. Maps today base most of these places on their Turkish names. Hence the Halys River is the *Kızılırmak*, meaning Red River, and Ishkhan has been named *İhane*, a word for an "office block", a significant rebranding from the Armenian days.



The remains of Varagavank, an Armenian Christian monastery complex on the slopes of Mount Erek, in Van Province, the former Armenian heartland in what is now far eastern Turkey. The monastery, founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, became the seat of the archbishop of the Armenian Church in Van, and in the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries it was a major center for manuscript production. During Apr. – May 1915, when about 6,000 Armenians fled genocidal massacres and sought refuge in this complex and in nearby villages, the Ottoman Turkish army descended on the area, attacking and burning the structures, including priceless ancient manuscripts. The Turkish government confiscated what was left of the monastery.

There long had been a history of religious intolerance in the Ottoman Empire, accompanied by massacres and pogroms. But for the Armenians in Ishkhan and scores of other towns and villages across Asia Minor, the Spring and Summer of 1915 marked something worse: the end of hundreds of years of productive existence on these lands. By then, the war-lording Ottoman rulers had lost the bulk of their European lands in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913; in 1914, the Empire joined Germany in World War 1, but suffered huge early losses to the Russians. Nearly encircled by enemies, the Ottomans' anger, and suspicion, landed internally on Christian minorities— especially the Armenians.

In 1914 and early 1915, massacres and pogroms erupted across the empire. Villages were burned, houses looted, Armenians killed. On April 24, 1915, Armenian intellectual and civic leaders were rounded up in Constantinople, the imperial capital. Eventually, hundreds were detained, imprisoned, and put to death. That began a systematic effort to destroy the entire Armenian population, through unendurable deportation, starvation, exposure, and murder. That effort has been well documented. Beside the eyewitness accounts of people like Sarah Andonian and thousands of other miraculous survivors,

there were countless witnesses: American, British, and German diplomats; missionaries from the U.S. and around the world; journalists; and the testimony provided at trials held in the after-

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*There long had been a history of religious intolerance in the Ottoman Empire, accompanied by massacres and pogroms. But for the Armenians in Ishkhan and scores of other towns and villages across Asia Minor, the Spring and Summer of 1915 marked something worse.*

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math of World War 1. The Turkish government's official denial notwithstanding, Armenian, Turkish, and international historians see little serious dispute about what happened.

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## Sarah's Story

*continued from page 19*

Throughout the Ottoman Empire, Armenian men were being rounded up, either to face punishment (that is, death) as traitors, or to serve as unarmed members of military labor battalions, also tantamount to death. One detailed history of the Armenian Genocide after another has documented the existence of Armenian defense groups and military units. But it was never a generalized phenomenon among the overwhelming majority of the population of Ottoman Armenians, who simply wished to be left alone.

In Ishkhan, Bobbe Temigian was worried about the prospect of being taken away by the Turks. He desperately sought money to pay the tax that allowed some Armenians to avoid military service for a time, Sarah recalls, based on stories told by her mother and Auntie Miriam. "He told my Auntie Miriam, I need money, so they don't take me away", she told us. "No other way [or else], I'll go soon." Miriam gave him six *akçe*, what they called the silver coins used as Turkish money. And it worked—for a couple of months. But soon enough, the Turkish soldiers returned. Bobbe Temigian and countless other men were taken away.

Bobbe's wife, Mary, and his sister, Miriam, went to visit him where he and the other men were being held, which experience at the time indicates may have been at an Islamic *madrasa*, or religious school, in the city of Sivas, which had been converted into a regional prison for Armenians. What Sarah knew: Her mother and auntie walked long distances to visit their imprisoned relation, as did other women from the village. One day, Bobbe exhorted them not to come back again. The next day, his wishes aside, they returned. "Nobody there", said Sarah. Hundreds of men were gone, put to death by squads of killers and buried in a trench.

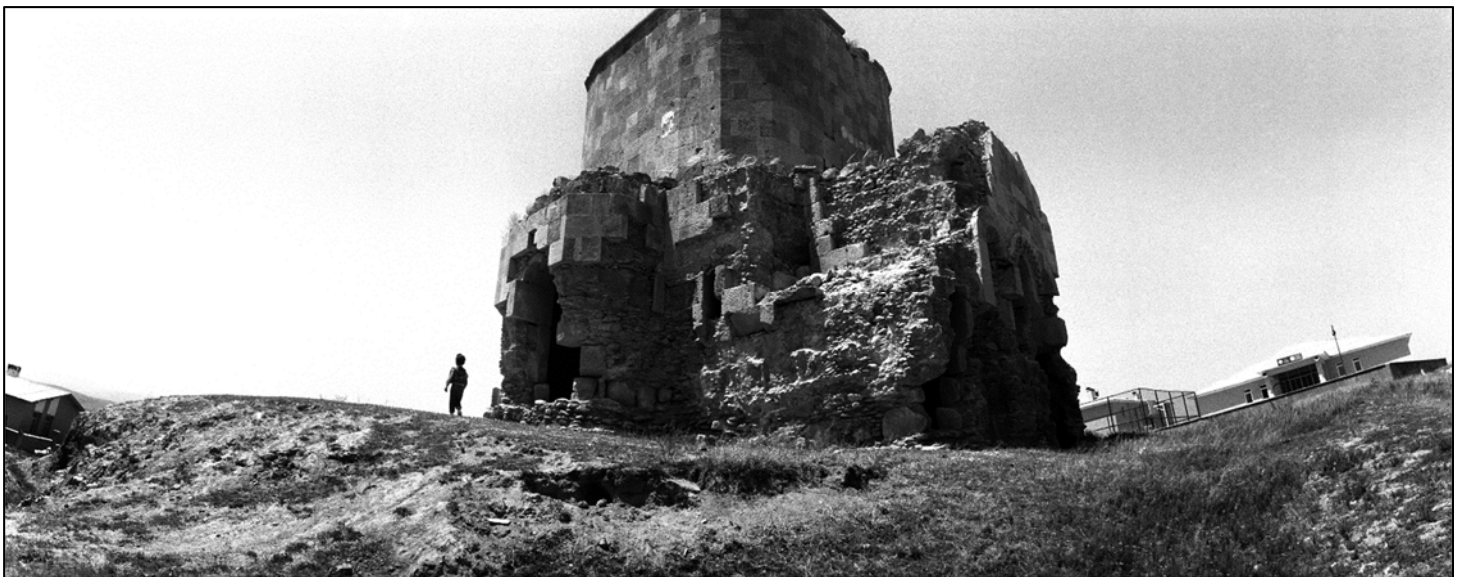
With any men near fighting age dead, the rest of the defenseless village was deported, sent with convoys of other Armenians from other defenseless villages on foot and, if they

were lucky, for a time, ox cart, in the direction of deserts in Syria and present-day Iraq. It was a death march, given the absence of provisions for any semblance of safety of hundreds of thousands of deported Armenians. Sarah walked with her mother and her 2-year-old brother Nishan, and the fatherless family was accompanied by her mother's sister and her daughter. Soon, Sarah's cousin was grabbed by, she believes, Kurds, who then were plucking women and children from the death march.

The Armenians from the city of Sivas and surrounding villages followed a common course in their 500-mile trek to the deserts. This means that we can be more than relatively certain along what path the death march took Sarah, her mother, and thousands of unfortunate Sepastatis. In a few days, they crossed the mountains to get to Kangal, where nearly any remaining male was removed from the convoys, never to be seen again. Robberies, kidnappings, and killings by armed bands and organized squads quickly became common. One American witness reported that the *yorghans* (quilts) and rugs carried by Armenians were looted and stolen. Before then, there were rumors of mass killings; soon the Sepastatis saw them firsthand and suffered them in person. Sarah's Auntie Miriam, traveling separately with father and mother, lost both along the way, her father beheaded by a Turkish gendarme. They went through Hasan Celebi, and Hekim Han, losing more people and more of their meager belongings. They went on toward Malatya, where witnesses and missionaries reported seeing many bodies of those who had died from exposure, starvation, dehydration. People were thrown by squadrons of irregulars into tributaries of the Euphrates River; many jumped in to end their own misery. They headed farther south, people dropping and dying along the way— young and old.

Much of this horror was simply too much for the terrified, 9-year-old mind of Sarah Temigian. In fact, much of it eluded her recollection altogether years later. The first part of the death march she remembered mainly like this: "Walk, walk, walk. All

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A schoolboy near the ruins of Sourp Etchmiadzin (Monastery of the Holy Cross) in the village of Dzoradir (now called Yanal), Turkey. First built in the Sixth Century, the monastery was in use until Armenians in the village were murdered during the genocide of 1915. The village is located about five miles from the Iranian border, in Van Province.

# 'My God is Better than Yours'

by Cynthia Jenzen (SC Dept. of Anthropology)

Jace Weaver, ed.,  
*Native American Religious Identity:  
 Unforgotten Gods*  
 New York: Orbis Books, 1998

It is easy to see how the European and indigenous worldviews are in contention with each other. The systematic theft of all of the land from the natives was an example of these clashing views; the European and American colonizers believed that such theft was justified by the God that they were attempting to force on the natives.

A consistent theme running through many of the essays is the profound feelings of alienation felt by Native Americans. Their spiritual beliefs were called "pagan", "devil worship", and other terms that served to instill a sense of loathing for their own cultural values. The words of William Baldrige, a Cherokee, are cited by Weaver in an introductory essay:

We are all familiar with the story of Europe's colonization of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. What is not so commonly known is the role that the Europeans played when it came to the spiritual lives of the Native Americans. The essay collection reviewed here is an eye-opening look at how the traditional beliefs of the native people were systematically demonized and subverted, and how every attempt was made to force these beliefs out of existence. We learn how these efforts often instilled a sense of self-loathing in the subject peoples, and an inability to connect to their true cultural history and spiritual life. The book contains essays by Native Americans, male and female, and even a poem. The pieces are thought-provoking and insightful.

One of the essays that I found most compelling was Dennis McPherson's "A Definition of Culture: Canada and First Nations". Understanding how culture informs the worldview of a people is very important. This is precisely where much of the conflict arises between groups. For example, the Judeo-Christian view of the relationship between people and nature is that of conqueror and conquered: nature is in place for our use and pleasure. The native people of the Americas, on the other hand, believe that they have a "oneness with creation and their spiritual ties to Mother earth" (p. 83). McPherson continues by quoting Marcel Mauss, a French sociologist, about how this belief plays out in a cultural context:

[P]roperty for the Aboriginal is a gift to be given and as such it is at the same time property and a possession, a pledge and a loan, an object sold and an object bought, a deposit, a mandate, a trust; for it is given only on the condition that it will be used on behalf of, or transmitted to, a third person, the remote partner.

A prime example is the *potlatch*, a tradition among indigenous tribes of the Pacific Northwest Coast. At a potlatch, a member of the community holds a ceremonial gathering where they give away goods and food. This is a leveling mechanism that helps to maintain social harmony, but it also reflects a more underlying belief that humans do not truly "own" the earth and its resources.

Many missionaries served as federal agents and in that role negotiated treaties which left us no land. Most missionaries taught us to hate anything Native American and that of necessity meant hating our friends, our families, and ourselves. Most refused to speak to us in any language but their own. The missionaries functioned as "Christ-bearing colonizers." If it were otherwise the missionaries would have come, shared the gospel, and left. We know, of course, that they stayed, and they continue to stay, and they continue to insist that we submit to them and their definitions. The vast majority of Native people have experienced the missionary system as racist and colonial... (pp. 6-7).

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In this 1859 watercolor painting by federal Indian agent James G. Swan, the chief's wife is distributing goods at a potlatch among the Klallam people in Port Townsend, WA.

Yale Univ. Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Record No. 2003195). Public domain/ Wikimedia Commons.



## Sarah's Story *continued from page 20*

day, walk. The next day, again walk, until people get hungry and die." It was not just her village, she recalled, but also people from other villages trudging along paths and roads, through mountains, exposed to the elements with little food or water, subject to the outrages of organized bands of trained prisoners and local thieves. She relied on stories that she pieced together from her mother and from Auntie Miriam, both of whom survived, to fill in some of the blanks in her memory.

Sarah told us that she must have suffered a "condition" that affected her memory. She believed that was so because during the weeks and months when she and thousands of Armenians plodded hundreds of miles across Asia Minor, her main recollection is of the terrible smell of human death. The smell of death and the sensation of stepping and jumping over bodies of the dead and dying. "Lots of people fall down and die", she said. "I see too many things, but I don't remember, I don't realize. I know the smell, that much I remember." She continued: "I can tell what was going on around [me] from the smell. Smell."

There probably is reason to think that this aspect of death early in her life had some connection to her preoccupation with fragrant roses and other flowers later in life. Many witnesses who later wrote about the genocide fixated on the smell of death, through the concentration camps and river gorges where hundreds upon thousands of Armenians died. As the human convoys passed Malatya and approached the Euphrates River, there were still more such reports, of bodies strewn along roads and rivers, of partial burials, of exposed limbs.

For Sarah, active memory didn't return until sometime late in 1915, after they arrived in Syria, then still an Ottoman holding and the destination for many Armenians. Her recollection began to reflect greater detail once they reached Hama, Homs, and Salamiyah.

In Salamiyah, Sarah, Mary, and Nishan finally stopped marching. But it was also here that her baby brother Nishan, suffering from the long deportation and the chronic shortage of food and water, died in the arms of his mother. For some time afterward, perhaps days, her mother carried Nishan's swaddled body with her. People attempted to peer into the blanket. "They would say, 'Boy or girl?' My mother said, 'Boy. He's sleeping. I don't want to wake him.'" There was a practical effect that was not lost on Mary Temigian: aid agencies would give more bread to a woman with two children than to a woman with only one child.

They remained in Salamiyah for what seemed to Sarah like at least a year. They found sympathetic Arabs, who gave them a safe plot of ground on which to sleep, and the opportunity to work for a little food. Sarah worked as a babysitter, at the age of perhaps 11 or 12. But things weren't all that comfortable; they slept outside, and Sarah recalled using a stone for a pillow. Some Armenians evidently settled in Salamiyah, finding it hospitable. Still, after a time, Mary and Sarah moved on, headed to Hama or perhaps Homs in Syria; then to Adana in present-day Turkey; next to Haleb, as the Armenians call Aleppo, Syria. It was in Aleppo that Sarah was reunited with her father's sister, Auntie Miriam. In Haleb, Miriam married a man named Soukias, who later would be known as Uncle Sam. From Haleb, they all

moved to Constantinople, present-day Istanbul, where they lived in the Ortakoy neighborhood, a cosmopolitan mix of ethnic groups at that time. There, Auntie Miriam found Sarah some work as a household maid.

In time, they made contact with Arshak Andonian, a longtime friend of Bobbe Temigian who had made his way to the U.S. before the deportations. He pledged to help the sister and daughter of his slain friend, as well as Soukias, Miriam's husband. To satisfy the immigration regulations of the day, they each entered the U.S. by claiming a "relative"—Arshak—as their reason for coming. Hence, Soukias—whose last name actually was Artinian—was entered on the U.S. immigration ship log as Soukias Andonian, Arshak's brother. Similarly, Sarah was listed as Arshak's daughter.

Further, Auntie Miriam had decided that Sarah should come to America to marry Mesag (Mike) Andonian, a relative of Arshak's. It would be an arranged marriage.

These plans all were made when Sarah was 16. Just after Thanksgiving, 1922, when Sarah had turned 17, they reached New York. The immigration officer questioning her filled out a log entry that asked how long she expected to stay in the United States: "Forever."

## Unforgotten Gods *continued from page 21*

The tug-of-war between the natives and their belief system, on the one hand, and the colonizers and their ethnocentric worldview, on the other hand, was a battle that placed the natives in limbo between two worlds. How could they maintain their identity against such a powerful and clearly single-minded culture determined to subjugate them into oblivion? Freda McDonald, in her essay, "No Longer an Indian: My Story", relates her own direct experiences confronting the denial of her identity:

The bottom of my world dropped out when I was handed the card reading, "Not deemed to be an Indian within the law or any other statute" because I had married a non-Native. The stigma of this life sentence entered my soul. This tore the last vestiges of my being into shreds, spiritually and mentally. By law, I could not live or be with my people anymore. I stood alone, once more, but this time naked—stripped of my identity and banished into a world of alienation and discrimination. My roots were severed. I was spiritually wounded (p. 73).

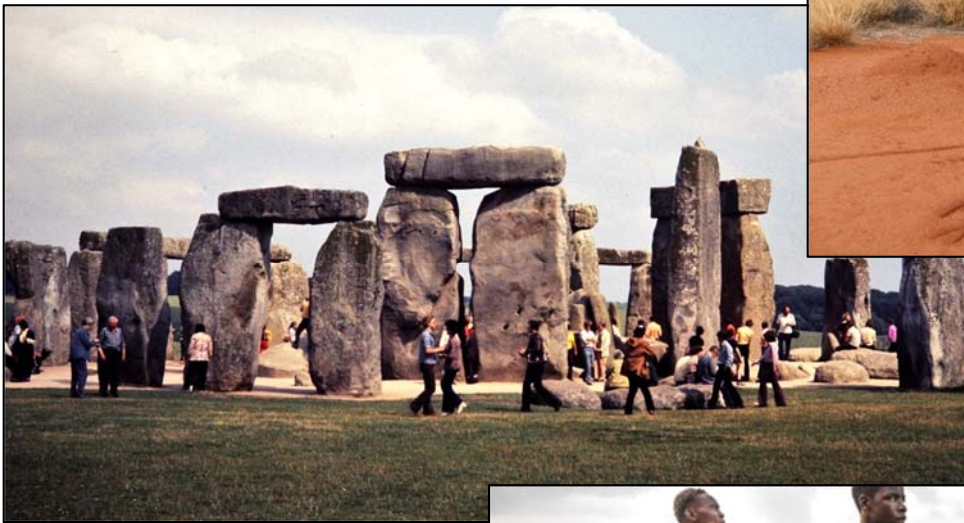
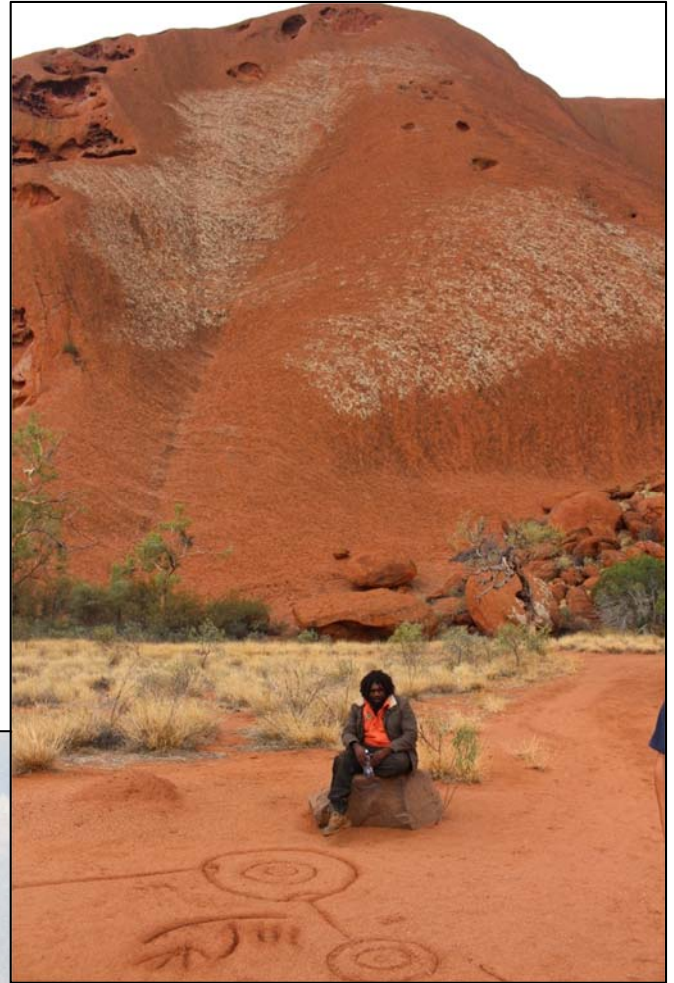
This is an excellent book that sheds light on many of the atrocities that were unseen by the public! I would definitely use the collection as a reference for teaching a course on Native Americans or on religion and spirituality. I believe that these essays bring to light issues that have not been explored thoroughly, and that they would stimulate very lively and constructive discussions.

# Traditions of Polytheism

Right, an aborigine sits near the base of Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock), a famous sandstone formation in central Australia that protrudes more than 1100 feet above a flat, dry expanse. The rock is sacred to the aborigines of the area. Their myths tell how it was created, and is still inhabited, by ancestral spirits taking the form of serpents, lizards, snakes, and the like. This man's sand painting tells a story of his dreaming, which is an important part of their spiritual traditions.

Below, tourists flock to the ruins of Stonehenge, the famous site in rural Wiltshire, England. The circular complex of stone monuments and burial mounds was a sacred site several millennia ago. Its functions most likely involved the ritual worship of ancestors and possibly the observation of movements in the sky, which ancient peoples believed gave insight into the workings and moods of the gods.

Photos by Schoolcraft College Emeritus Prof. of English Gordon L. Wilson, from 2014 and 1974, respectively.



Residents of Cité Soleil, a district in Port-au-Prince that is the poorest in Haiti, gather in a cemetery on Nov. 2, the last day of the two-day *Fèt Gede*, the Vodou festival for the dead. In the Vodou religion, *Gede* is the family of spirits who oversee death. People wear the spirits' favorite colors (black, white, and purple), drink their favorite libation (moonshine spiked with chili peppers), visit the tombs of loved ones, and carry out rituals that show a mixture (syncretism) of West African, Caribbean, and Roman Catholic beliefs. In Vodou, there is a supreme being called *Bondye* (from the French term *Bon Dieu*, meaning "good God"), but only the spirits that *Bondye* rules over can intercede in human affairs.

Photo: Daniel Berehulak, *The New York Times* (Dec. 13, 2017).





# Questioning the Logic of Traditional Islamic Customs

by Yovana P. Veerasamy

*Yovana Veerasamy taught Political Science and French at Schoolcraft College during 2004-2017. She is currently employed as the Designated School Official (DSO) for International Student Services at Henry Ford College in Dearborn, MI, and is completing a doctoral program in Higher Education Administration, with a focus on internationalization, at the Univ. of Toledo.*

Manal al-Sharif,  
*Daring to Drive: A Saudi Woman's Awakening*  
New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017

*Daring to Drive* is a memoir that recounts the challenges faced by Manal al-Sharif, a young, educated Saudi Arabian woman who dared to own a car and drive by herself. But more than that, this book is a broader analysis of Saudi society's treatment of women. Al-Sharif exposes, for example, the deaths of female students on campuses because male paramedics are not allowed to enter their lodgings. She draws attention to the poor driving skills of male taxi drivers upon whom women have to rely.

Raised in the Islamic holy city of Mecca, al-Sharif is herself the daughter of a taxi driver. She grew up in a period when strict Islamic fundamentalism took hold of the country. It is therefore no surprise that initially, she espoused such fundamentalist views herself and sought to live her life by its strict terms, expecting the same from family members around her.

One May afternoon in 2011 she had her first encounter with police officers. Al-Sharif, then 32, was employed as an information security consultant for the Saudi national oil company, Saudi Aramco. As a protest of the limited freedom of movement that held back Saudi women like herself, she was driving her brother's car that day while he was in the passenger seat.

The police pulled her over for the offense that we might call "driving while female", and she spent a few hours at Thuqbah Police Station. There were no females' quarters there, and Manal states that Saudi law did not explicitly bar women from driving vehicles: it was more a deeply-engrained custom or taboo, rooted in broader patriarchal traditions in the Islamic world. Al-Sharif was released and went home to her Aramco compound that same day, thinking it was all over. But in the middle of the night she was woken up by loud bangs on her front door—the secret police had come for her.

Al-Sharif was a working single mother raising a young boy. (She notes that the Saudi divorce rate is high; her parents were divorced, and so was she.) Finding a male to drive her to places to which she could have driven herself was taking its toll on her patience. The Aramco compound is an Americanized part of Saudi Arabia, originally developed by John D. Rockefeller;



*Vogue Arabia's* June 2018 cover page, hailing a new Saudi law explicitly granting women the right to drive, featured a ruling princess instead of courageous women's rights activists such as Manal al-Sharif, who have withstood imprisonment and public opprobrium.

there, women have habitually gone outdoors without veils and have been allowed to drive. In addition, al-Sharif had previously worked in the U.S. itself. As a modern woman, her independence and confidence in her abilities made her question the logic of traditional customs.

Her dissection of the contradictions within such customs is riveting. Women are "queens"—but they are not allowed to drive! Instead they have to rely on male taxi drivers or the taxi black market, where women ride in cars driven by unknown men. The practice puts them at risk of being harassed, or even blackmailed based on their phone conversations in the car.

Al-Sharif's experience unravels the journey of a young, educated, divorced Saudi mother who was basically just trying to live her life. Her interactions with men in the workplace were described as flirtatious, since they were viewed as defying traditional customs. Educated and employed, she saw nothing wrong in her behavior. Although she found some support from other Saudis and via social media, she mostly had to live and experience the adverse consequences of her choices.

This work presents an insightful account of the contradictions that mar modern Saudi society. Well-written and detailed, it provides important insights into how value systems change based on cultural interactions.

# A Moderate Revival: Islam in Central Asia

by Janice J. Terry

*Dr. Janice Terry is an adjunct professor of history at Marietta College in Ohio, and a professor emeritus at Eastern Michigan Univ., where she taught courses in Middle Eastern studies from 1968 to 2005. This article is based on her travels in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in April 2018. Prof. Terry holds a B.A. degree in History and English Literature from the College of Wooster, an M.A. in Arab Studies from the American Univ. of Beirut, and a Ph.D. in Oriental and African Studies from the Univ. of London. Her books include U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Role of Lobbies and Special Interest Groups; The Wafd 1919-1952: Cornerstone of Egyptian Political Power; and William Yale: Witness to Partition in the Middle East, WWI-WWII. In addition, she has written numerous articles on Arab regional issues and has served as an editor for the Arab Studies Quarterly.*

Islam is the major religion in both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Over 80% of the populations in both nations self-identify as Muslim; the overwhelming majority are Sunni Muslims, as opposed to Shi'i. In contrast to the neighboring countries of Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, both Uzbeks and Turkmens practice a moderate form of Sunni Islam. Consequently, their religious practices—or lack thereof—vary greatly from the Wahhabi, fundamentalist ultra-conservatism promoted by Saudi Arabia and from the Shi'i practices that characterize present-day Iran.

## The Former Glory of Islam in Central Asia

Arab conquests through Persia (present-day Iran) from 642 to 712 CE brought Islam into Central Asia, where the peoples gradually became Muslim converts, although Jewish communities involved with trade continued to prosper and remained integral parts of the societies well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Khiva, Bukhara, and Samarqand, major cities along the Silk Road in present-day Uzbekistan, became centers of Islamic scholarship and cultural achievements. For example, the noted scientist and physician, Abu Ali ibn-Sina, known as Avicenna in the West, lived in Bukhara under the patronage of the local Muslim ruler.

Numerous *madrasas* or Islamic colleges were established in Bukhara and Samarqand to educate generations of Islamic scholars in the 14<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. While no longer in use as religious institutions, these architectural gems remain as testaments to the glory of Islam in the Central Asian republics and are still popular tourist sites for both local and foreign visitors. Many now house craft bazaars or small shops selling a wide variety of locally-made goods.

Following his bloody conquests of the Arab Middle East, the Turco-Mongol ruler Timurlane (1336-1405) brought the oldest known extant Qur'an (Koran), penned only a few years after the death of the prophet Muhammad, to Samarqand, where it remains on display. Timurlane is buried next to his much-esteemed Muslim teacher and adviser in an elaborate mausoleum in central Samarqand.

## Soviet and Post-Soviet Rule

Russian incursions into Central Asia began in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and by the 1920s, all of the states in the region, including Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, came under Soviet control and were incorporated as republics within the greater Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). All religions, including Islam, were severely repressed under the Soviet system.

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The Tilya-Kori *madrasa*, built in 1646-60, is part of a three-*madrasa* complex in Registan, the ancient central district of Samarqand, Uzbekistan. The brick construction with tall arches, embellished with vivid blue glazed tiles, is typical of Islamic architecture throughout Central Asia. (All photos by Janice Terry.)



## Islam in Central Asia *continued from page 25*

After 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed, the five Central Asian “stans” (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) became independent states. In Turkmenistan, Suparmurat Niyazov, who soon styled himself “Turkmenpashi” with a “monopoly” on wisdom, and Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan both quickly established authoritarian regimes that monopolized political and economic power. These authoritarian regimes were strikingly similar to the old Soviet system. Niyazov used the wealth from Turkmenistan’s enormous natural gas production to modernize the country and turn the capital, Ashgabat, into a showplace of white marble with wide boulevards, lavish government buildings, and many gold statues of himself.

In Uzbekistan, cotton production had been a large part of the economy under the Soviets and remained so under Karimov’s regime, even though cotton requires an enormous amount of water irrigation. Overuse caused the gradual shrinkage and, ultimately, almost complete disappearance of the Aral Sea (actually an inland lake); as the lake shrank, winds carried the salt from the dry lake bed over thousands of acres of land, rendering them unusable for agriculture. The desertification of enormous tracts of land and loss of water resources is generally considered to be one of the greatest man-made disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In addition, thousands of Uzbeks, under both the Soviets and Karimov, were forcibly conscripted to harvest the cotton. Hence, the initial euphoria that characterized public attitudes in the first years of independence was soon tempered by political and economic realities, as well as by fears raised by the import of more radical Islam.

In both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, radical Islamist movements— influenced and, in many cases, directly supported and financed by Wahhabi fundamentalist organizations sponsored by Saudi Arabia, as well as neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan— became politically and militarily active. The upheavals in neighboring countries, as well as the growth of radical Sunni Islam, including the Taliban, al-Qa’ida, and later ISIS, among others, soon spilled over into both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) that aimed to overthrow Karimov and establish an Islamic state, and the Hizb al-Tahrir (HT), were both characterized as terrorist organizations and were banned by the Karimov regime. In 2004, Islamists launched a series of suicide bombings in Tashkent, the historic Uzbek capital. Karimov responded by cracking down on all suspected radical groups.

Following the Sep. 11, 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan immediately announced their support for the U.S. Uzbekistan also permitted the U.S. to use its airspace and to establish an airbase in support of the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. However, relations soured after the U.S. criticized the Karimov regime for its 2005 brutal attacks on anti-government demonstrators in the city of Andijan in the Fergana Valley, located in the far eastern part of Uzbekistan.

After Turkmenpashi died in late 2006, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow became president; he initially loosened some governmental controls and downgraded the cult of personality



Before Friday prayers at a mosque in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, two women are giving alms, a duty under Islam. They are stylishly dressed in gorgeous red outfits printed in the *ikat* style, which arrived in Central Asia from further East centuries ago via the Silk Roads.

that had surrounded Turkmenpashi, thereby raising hopes that the new president would institute major reforms. But Berdimuhamedow’s rule has been almost as idiosyncratic as that of his predecessor. For example, he recently declared that all cars should be white. To indulge his new passion for golf, Berdimuhamedow ordered the construction of a lavish golf course, where, on his first visit, he got a well-publicized hole-in-one.

Visitors to Ashgabat now see a prosperous urban center, known as the “City of White Marble”; at night, the buildings are gaudily illuminated in multi-colored, flashing neon lights that are reminiscent of Las Vegas, but without the “sin factor”. Drugs, spitting, public intoxication, littering, begging, jay-walking, or speeding in cars, are all prohibited by law and punishable with hefty fines and, in the case of repeat offenders, prison terms.

In neighboring Uzbekistan, following Karimov’s death in 2016, Shavkat Mirziyoev immediately loosened political controls, instituted some economic reforms, banned the forced labor for harvesting cotton, and moved to shift the agricultural sector toward ecologically friendlier and economically profitable crops like fruits and vegetables.



The huge mosque at Gypjak, outside Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, stands empty even at prayer time.

to train new generations of *imams*, religious leaders. The functioning *madrasa* in Tashkent is also open to women.

Women do not wear a veil or a long black robe (*abayah*), which were, in fact, never customary in

China and Russia remain major economic trading partners for both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and their economic and political influence have increased over the last few years. China views all of Central Asia as key to its Belt and Road Initiative, a new development strategy that focuses on trade, cultural ties, and other cooperation among Eurasian countries.

#### The Character of Religious Life Today

The governments in both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan enforce a strict separation of church and state. Islamic practices and ceremonies are generally discouraged, and Islamic institutions are closely monitored. For example, in contrast to most Muslim nations, *muezzins* do not call the faithful to prayer five times a day, and even on the Muslim holy day of Friday, calls to prayer are muted, “So as not to disturb others.” Attendance for daily prayers is extremely low, even on Fridays, and is only slightly higher on religious holidays. The biggest mosque in Central Asia, outside the Turkmenistan capital of Ashgabat, is usually totally empty, even at prayer times.

Similarly, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan is not enforced, even though Islam views this as one of the five main duties of believers. Shops and restaurants remain open, and government officials and others, especially in cities, do not generally fast. Alcohol, especially vodka, popularly known as PSL (Problem Solving Liquid), is readily available.

The number of citizens permitted to go on the annual *hajj*—the pilgrimage to the holy sites in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, which is considered a duty at least once in the life of every Muslim—is strictly controlled and limited by the governments. Proselytizing, for any religion, is illegal. Only a handful of *madrasas* are open to provide religious education and

Central Asia. Both adult men and women usually wear some sort of head covering: caps, hats or fancy scarves. Women favor brightly-colored dresses or pants. Most marriage ceremonies are civil ones, although couples may opt for a religious as opposed to a civil marriage.

Because domestic Islamic institutions in Central Asia are moderate and constantly monitored, the potential for radical Islamism to take hold there would most likely have to arise from outside influences, particularly from Sunni states along the borders of these countries or from the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, the governments rigorously enforce their borders to ensure that no incendiary materials or radical tracts are brought in. They closely monitor and watch for any suspected Islamic militants who might seek to enter from neighboring countries. If caught, suspected radicals are either denied entry or promptly arrested. Since the Shi’i population is very small in Central Asia, and neighboring Iran has generally not sought to export its particular brand of Islamic government, the border with Iran remains quiet.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and establishment of independent Central Asian states, the Jewish populations in Central Asia, especially in Bukhara and Samarqand, have steadily declined as Jewish young people emigrated to western nations or Israel. Only a small number remain, mostly elderly. Thus, barring some unforeseen return of younger generations, the Jewish populations in Central Asia will disappear within the coming decades.

If the economies in these states remain reasonably robust and the governments continue to allow relative economic, political, and social freedom, it is unlikely that radical movements will gain substantial support among the peoples of either Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan. •



# Transforming Space into Oratory

## Historical Islamic Architecture

by Hashim Al-Tawil

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Islamic art, which arose with the inception of Islam in the Seventh Century, has been characterized by art historians as decorative, aniconic (without icons), and nonfigurative. Vague terms such as *Arabesque* have been used to define the perceived ornamental style. Phrases such as *horror vacui* have also been applied, with historians arguing that Muslim artists simply disliked empty spaces and filled them with geometric patterns, floral and vegetal designs, and decorative calligraphic compositions. But recent re-evaluation of the subject has advanced the important new concept of power as an implied visual objective. This article sheds light on the aesthetic use of Arabic text in historical Islamic architecture as a means to transform spaces into oration and *oratorio*, engaging visitors and viewers using interactive live discourse.

### Pre-Islamic Roots

It is important to understand that Islamic culture was not born anew in the Seventh Century. Instead, it extended and re-contextualized contemporary pre-Islamic traditions of the Byzantines, Sassanians, and indigenous Arab cultures.

Pre-Islamic Arabs had played significant roles in lucrative intercontinental trade on the Silk Roads that passed through various Arab lands. This trade activity was key in exposing them to diverse neighboring populations. The Arabs were thus aware of far-flung religions, languages, and ethnicities, contrary to the widespread misconception of the pre-Islamic period as “the age of ignorance” (Arabic *jahiliyya*). This misperception has been propagated by both Western and Muslim historians. It presents pre-Islamic Arabs as mobile Bedouins, who lived in tents, raided and pillaged others, were illiterate and lacking in basic cultural

norms, and did not produce or appreciate any worthwhile culture.

Historical records reveal that regional Arab powers (ministates) were instrumental in the management of trade beginning around 2000 BCE. The earliest evidence of this occurred with the Canaanite-Phoenicians, a Semitic confederation of people that migrated from the Arabian Peninsula to the Fertile Crescent. Active in trade throughout the Mediterranean, the Phoenicians interacted with the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and later the Greeks and Romans. Their art reveals a well-developed visual tradition, especially in sculpture. Their religious beliefs, mythology, and ritualistic practices were firmly rooted in ancient Arab tradition.

In the South of the Arabian Peninsula, in present-day Yemen, numerous Arab kingdoms thrived and were active in trade in the last several centuries BCE: the Minaean Kingdom centered in Ma'in; the Sabaeans, centered in Ma'rib and contemporary with the later Roman era; the Himyarites, who experienced the ongoing confrontation between the Romans and the Persians-Sassanids; the Qatabanians; and the Hadhramawt. The South Arabian population developed a unique and vibrant artistic tradition that incorporated aspects of many neighboring cultures.

North of the Arabian Peninsula, a string of Arab kingdoms flourished in key locations along the trade highway: Petra and Palmyra in Greater Syria; Hirah and Hatra in Iraq. Arabs in these cities survived foreign occupation by major powers: Greeks, Roman, Parthians, Sassanians, and Byzantines. They also produced a distinct tradition of visual art and architecture that reflected inspiration from their dominating powers.

Monotheism had developed and spread among the Arabs in different parts of the region. Islam was not a rupture, but rather a continuation and outgrowth from the Judeo-Christian tradition. It rose to power in Mecca during the first quarter of the 600s CE, headed by the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad was experienced in trade, aware of regional political strife, and attentive to the economic control attained by Byzantine and Sassanian Empires over the Arabs in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. He sought to unify the Arab people and their powerful resources. The rapid growth of the Muslim community, now united in the Arabian Peninsula, and the swift military success over both the Sassanians and the Byzantines, set the stage for the development of an Arab-Islamic Empire and its culture, including art and architecture.

### Islamic Architecture: Manifestation of Power

During the Islamic era, indigenous culture, mythology, religious beliefs, rituals, and most importantly oral tradition (both the written and recited word) played a significant role in the shaping of Arab literary and visual culture.



Above the floral, vegetal, and geometric patterns, Qur'anic inscription can be seen on the inner face of the arcade in the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem.

Photo:  
<https://squarekufic.com>  
 from 2016.

The defining characteristics of early Muslim architecture are the open courtyard plan, the pointed arch, the horseshoe arch, double-tiered columns in the prayer area of a mosque, the *mihrab* (an interior wall niche indicating the prayer direction toward Mecca), the *manara* or “minaret” (a tower from which the *muezzin* calls the believers to prayer), and non-figurative decoration. Beginning in the Seventh Century, there was strict adherence to the use of non-figurative narratives in religious structures and objects; meanwhile, decoration of non-religious residential and secular spaces continued the tradition of including figurative narrations. Examples of the latter can be seen in the Umayyad palaces Qusayr 'Amra and Khirbat al-Mafjar and the Abbasid caliphal palace in Samarra, Iraq.

Apart from some antecedents in Medina (on the Arabian Peninsula) and in Kufa and Basra (in present-day Iraq), the earliest manifestations of Islamic architecture appeared in Greater Syria under the Umayyad dynasty with two monumental buildings: The Dome of the Rock (a shrine in the Old City of Jerusalem, completed in 691) and the Great Mosque of Damascus (completed in 715). Both buildings contain Byzantine architectural elements blended with the new Islamic style. For example, the Dome of the Rock incorporates the Byzantine elements of an octagonal rotunda plan and decorative mosaic, but also presents the novelty of an Islamic “oratorical architecture” through the introduction of selected verses from the Qur'an. The writing, carried out in Kufic-style calligraphy, is still visible on the interior of the mosque. Originally, there might have been more such verses on the mosque exterior, where mosaic works were replaced with ceramic tiles during renovation by the Ottomans in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century,

Recent iconographical interpretations suggest that the Dome of the Rock represents a victory monument. By order of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik, it was built to surround the rock that Muslims believe was the starting point of Muhammad's night journey to heaven. The location, size, and decoration of the shrine reflect the concept of a triumphant new political entity, the Arab-Muslims, in an area that had been under Byzantine power for centuries. The original mosaic text included carefully selected verses from the Qur'an, spread around the interior in a band 240 meters long. The selected verses focus on theological matters concerning *tawhid* (the Unity or oneness of Allah, God),

the message and nature of Jesus Christ as a Prophet, and the Christian concept of Trinity. The text represents a dialogue and debate directly addressing the Christian population of Jerusalem, which makes the mosque a forum for theological and cultural discourse. The walls of the Dome of the Rock were speaking to attendees; in this way, the building became an oratory.

Here we have the earliest use of Arabic text in architecture, where the building is addressing, debating, and conversing with the audience. It marks the birth of a remarkable visual trend, *oratorical architecture*. As we will see, this trend would continue to appear in Arab-Islamic art, both secular and religious, in different times and places in succeeding centuries.

#### The Abbasid Caliphate and the Confluence of Cultures

The Abbasids took control of the political system and expanded the Islamic state in 750, marking the end of Umayyad rule and the start of a new global era. The Islamic Empire expanded eastward through Persia and Central Asia to the borders of China and India. Baghdad became the new capital of the empire. Egypt, North Africa, and a considerable part of the Iberian Peninsula up to the border of France, became Muslim territories.

The Abbasids sponsored a massive program of preserving, studying, and developing all known fields of knowledge. A network of institutions of higher learning was established, starting in Baghdad with the *Bayt al-Hikma*, literally “House of Wisdom”, a library and center for scholars. This pattern was later replicated in Cairo, Jerusalem, Qayrawan (in modern-day Tunisia), Cordoba (Spain), and other major cities. These early centers attracted scholars from distant lands and cultures, who brought materials from Persia, India, and the Hellenistic worlds. Scholars from diverse backgrounds were recruited: Muslims, Christians, Jews, and others. Arabic was the official language, but scholars were also proficient in Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, Pahlavi (Middle Iranian), and other languages. A revolution based on the exaltation of knowledge began, resulting in the preservation, translation, study, annotation, and further development of the global intellectual heritage, especially the Greco-Roman knowledge base. Science was sought, studied, and implemented in many aspects of life throughout the caliphate.

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## Islamic Architecture *continued from page 29*



Above: Monumental bands of calligraphy adorn the main entrance of Al-Mustansiriyya school, Baghdad, 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Photo: Zzztriple2000 from 2008, via Wikimedia Commons.

Right: Facade of the entrance to Ince Minareli Medrasah in Konya, Turkey, 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Photo: Donnyhoca from 2009, via Wikimedia Commons.



Al-Mustansiriyya *madrasa*, or religious school, was built in 1233 along the Tigris River in the heart of Baghdad to serve students from all four Islamic schools of jurisprudence (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali). It is a massive rectangular building, 106 by 48 meters, with a large open central courtyard of 62 by 26 meters. Rooms and *iwans* (vaulted spaces open from one side) occupy the two levels of the building. The interior decorations on the facades, under the arches, and inside the *iwans* consist of carved bricks with calligraphic text as well as geometric and floral patterns. The outer walls and the entire facade of the main entrance are adorned with bands of monumental calligraphy in modified Thuluth-Naskh style. The text is a proclamation of achievement and a road map for the building's use, announcing the Caliph's intent and his vision.

The decorative architectural system of the Abbasids also appeared in buildings outside of Iraq. An example is the Ince Minareli Medrasah, built in 1258-79 in Konya, Turkey. The entrance of this school is carved in stone and contains vertical bands or ribbons, with emphasis on the central two intertwining banners. The elegant, monumental Thuluth calligraphy pronounces verses from chapters 36 and 110 of the Qur'an. The entrance becomes the orator; the announcer of the nature, essence, and function of the building, transformed into oratorio.

Oratorical architecture also appeared under Fatimid rule in Egypt and North Africa, which would be incorporated into the Abbasid Caliphate in 1171. The best example is the al-Aqmar mosque, a small congregational mosque with a square courtyard, constructed in 1125 in the heart of Cairo. The stone facade is a superb work of art, richly decorated with geometric, floral, and *muqarnas* elements. Perhaps the most astounding aesthetic display is the elaborate Arabic text, in Kufic style, containing Qur'anic verses, names and titles of the Caliph, the Wazir

(minister), and dates of the foundation. Atop the central doorway of the mosque, inside the shelled pointed arch, is an elaborate medallion whose inner circle of script contains the name of the Prophet Muhammad and that of his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, the fourth Caliph and the central figure of the Shi'a branch of Islam. This in turn is encircled by a band containing verses from chapter 33 of the Qur'an. The passages address *ahl al-bayt*, referring to the "people of the house" of the Prophet: Muhammad, Fatima, 'Ali, Hasan, and Hussain. The entrance therefore proudly announces the Fatimid rulers' fidelity to Shi'ism, and similar Shi'i references are found in other parts of the building.



Facade of al-Aqmar mosque, 1125, Cairo, Egypt. Photo: TheLongTone from 2007, via Wikimedia Commons.



### The Emirate of Sicily and its Norman Aftermath

Sunni Muslims from what is now Tunisia conquered the islands of Sicily and Malta in the 800s and 900s. The new rulers constructed fortresses, mosques, castles, and palaces in many cities and towns on the islands. Palermo was made the capital of the Emirate of Sicily, replacing the former Byzantine capital, Syracuse.

The Great Mosque of Palermo is a congregational mosque erected on the site of an older Byzantine basilica. In 1185 the Normans, who had conquered Sicily in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, demolished the mosque and constructed a cathedral; there were additional enlargements in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries. But historical evidence shows that the mosque was still functioning after the initial conquest. It seems that the conversion to a church was done gradually over an extended period of time: in part because the Muslim population in Palermo was not suddenly expelled but instead was gradually converted, and in part because the Arab architectural style was already mature at the time of the Norman conquest, and the Normans had little artistic heritage to add to that of the Byzantines and Muslims. Thus, some parts of the old mosque were incorporated into the new church. Distinct Andalusian and North African features are still clearly present, such as interlaced arches, pointed arches, the square multi-section tower-minaret, and geometric design. Remnants of the mosque's *mihrab* and prayer hall with *muqarnas* elements still stand behind the church altar wall near the tower. At the entrance of the cathedral, a stone column still stands with carved verses from the Qur'an (chapter 7, verse 52): "For we have certainly sent into them [the people of the book] a book based on knowledge, which we explained in detail—a guide and a mercy to all who believe."

Palermo Cathedral, formerly the Great Mosque, in Palermo, Sicily.  
Photo: Hashim Al-Tawil from 2007.



Qur'anic text on the original mosque's pillar, now at the entrance of the Palermo Cathedral in Palermo, Sicily.  
Photo: Hashim Al-Tawil from 2007.

La Zisa is a large castle and palace in Palermo whose construction began in 1165 under Norman King William I and was completed in 1180 by his son King William II. Apparently part of a network of palaces designed as a Summer residence for the king, it was located in a large hunting resort known as Genoardo, from the Arabic *jannat al-'ardh*, "earthly paradise". These resort castles offered retreats for the royal family, close to Palermo and surrounded by delightful scenes. Genoardo was planned with wooded areas, orchards, and vineyards. Animals and birds roamed freely in open natural settings. Artificial lakes, ponds, and pleasing fountains surrounded the palaces. The Norman kings established these parks following the customs of the Arab/Muslim *emirs* in regions such as Syria and Andalusia.

In fact, Arab architects and craftsmen were responsible for the design and architectural decoration of La Zisa. "Zisa" is derived from the Arabic *al-qasr al-'aziz*, "the revered palace", part of a couplet of Arabic poetry carved in modified Naskh style on both sides of the entrance arch to welcome visitors and introduce the pal-

*continued on next page*



## Islamic Architecture *continued from page 31*



Arabic inscription at the entrance of the hall of La Zisa palace, 12<sup>th</sup> Century, Palermo, Sicily. Photo: Hashim Al-Tawil from 2007.

ace to them. The lines there read, in part: “You shall see the great king of the era in his beautiful dwelling-place, a house of joy and splendor, which suits him well.... This is the earthly paradise that reveals its beauty. And this is the king, the one exalted with the support of Allah, and this is the revered palace.” King William II officially used the Arabic phrase *al-musta‘iz bi-Allah*, “the one exalted with the support of Allah”, as his honorific title in imitation of the Fatimids and the Abbasid Caliphs. The title of his father, William I, was *al-hadi bi-amr-Allah*, “the one who leads to the right path with the guidance of Allah”, and his grandfather Roger II acquired the honorific title of *al-mu‘azz bi-Allah*, “the one who is proud and strengthened by Allah”, which was originally the honorific title of the 13<sup>th</sup> Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad (866-69). These honorific titles are found written in Arabic on many Norman documents as well as on Norman gold and silver coins of the period.

Perhaps the most celebrated monument in Palermo is the royal chapel of King Roger II, known as the Cappella Palatina. It

is a Romanesque-style private church decorated with Byzantine-style mosaics of Biblical narratives. The ceiling is pure *muqarnas* made of wood and painted with Arab-Islamic decorative motifs along with rich calligraphic compositions. The Arabic text contains chants, short phrases, and expressions of blessings and support, but no certain name of a king or ruler is found. These Arabic compositions reflect expressions of magni-

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*It is striking how highly multicultural was the production of art and architecture in 12<sup>th</sup>-Century Sicily. Muslim inhabitants, architects, artisans, and craftsmen were living and working in Palermo under the rule of Christian Norman kings in what can be described as an advanced and tolerant society.*

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ficence, grandeur, beauty, protection, might, safety, happiness, victory, triumph, good health, well-being, beatitude, vivaciousness, permanence, good omen, and prosperity. The iconography of the pictorial program and the text on the ceiling is in effect a podium celebrating, blessing, and praising the leader: a common theme found in private reception spaces of the traditional Arab *emir*, governor, or Caliph’s *diwan* (audience hall), which the Norman rulers adopted in Sicily.

It is striking how highly multicultural was the production of art and architecture in 12<sup>th</sup>-Century Sicily. Muslim inhabitants, architects, artisans, and craftsmen were living and working in Palermo under the rule of Christian Norman kings in what can be described as an advanced and tolerant society. The Norman rulers sought to be identified with Arab cultural practices and aesthetics as a mark of high culture. In addition to the examples discussed above, others in Palermo include the palace of La



Examples of Arabic text on the *muqarnas* ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, Palermo, Sicily.

Photos: Hashim Al-Tawil from 2007.





Alhambra interior with stucco work, calligraphy, and *muqarnas* (“stalactites”), Granada, Spain.

Photo:  
JaritahLu from 2015,  
via Wikimedia Commons.

Castello della Cuba in Genoardo Park, the Martorana church (Concattedrale Santa Maria dell’Ammiraglio), Monreale Cathedral, and Chefalù Cathedral. Museums in Europe and especially in Sicily house numerous cultural materials that also attest to this point, including the famous royal mantle of Roger II that was designed and produced by Arabs at the Tiraz factory in Sicily in 1133-34, marble slabs adorned with Arabic poetry in colored inlay, inscriptions praising Roger II and his palace, many luxury ivory carved boxes, jewelry, Qur’anic manuscripts, and grave headstones with informative obituaries.

#### Andalusia and the Alhambra

When Arabs and Muslims took power in the Iberian Peninsula (modern-day Spain and Portugal), the Islamic architectural trend of transforming buildings into interactive platforms communicating with the viewer accompanied them. This was manifested in numerous major structures in Cordoba, Granada, Toledo, and Seville.

An Umayyad-led army of Arabs and Berbers conquered southern Iberia from the Visigoths in 711. The territory, named al-Andalus, would become the most sophisticated and advanced state in all of Europe during the 10-13<sup>th</sup> Centuries. It was a vibrant center for transmitting the Arab and Muslim achievements in medicine, art, literature, philosophy, and other fields to Europe. Al-Andalus became a conduit for knowledge, science, and advanced learning between the Muslim and Christian worlds, and contributed to the emergence of the Renaissance in Europe.

But the increased pressure of the Iberian Christians in the north, coupled with turbulent internal politics among the Moorish rulers, led to the fragmentation of Andalusia into many *tawa’if* (singular *ta’ifa*),

small, semi-independent emirates that were unable to repel the advances of the northern Christian armies. The Christians continued their charge against al-Andalus relentlessly, and the last emirate, Granada, surrendered to the armies of Castile and Aragon under Isabella and Ferdinand in 1492. The Muslims were expelled from Iberia after nearly 800 years, during which they had created a remarkable culture, arts, and architecture.

The marvelous Islamic architecture is on full display at a fortified royal palace complex in Granada known as the Alhambra (a Spanish rendering of the original Arabic name al-Hamra’, “the red”, probably referring to the color of its building materials). Its layout and decoration are considered the standard source and prime example of Arab-Islamic royal architecture of the late Middle Ages. Initially built in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century as a small palace castle, it was enlarged in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and became the official royal palace of Granada. In 1333 the Nasrids, the last dynasty of al-Andalus, added more sections to the complex, including a defensive wall. The complex survived in relatively reasonable condition even though it suffered regular abuse and negligence beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. After the Christian reconquest, the complex was appropriated for royal residential use.

Most famous in the Alhambra is the interior decoration, which includes characteristic Andalusian arches, colonnaded arcades, interlaced and intertwined arches, *muqarnas* patterns at the base of domes and under arches and corners of rooms, carved stucco geometric and floral design work on marble, wood, and plaster, glazed ceramic tiles on walls, elegant slender marble columns, and magnificent calligraphic inscriptions throughout the spaces of the complex.

The distribution of the Arabic epigraphic material on the walls, spandrels, arch crowns, and doorframes present a marvelous and unparalleled visual statement. The text is written in various calligraphic styles: old geometric Kufic, modified Naskh, and modified Thuluth. The text contains commemorations and praises for the builder—the Caliph—along with short statements of good wishes and, repeated every-

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Ibn Al-Khatib's poetry in the *Salón de Comares* at the Alhambra in Granada, Spain.

Photo:  
Kines Travel  
(Buenos Aires, Argentina,  
<http://viajes.kinestravel.com.ar>)  
from 2017.

where, the motto of the Nasrid dynasty, *Wa la ghaliba illa Allah* (“There is no victor but Allah”). This saying is derived from chapter 12, verse 21 of the Qur’an, although some sources also ascribe political and psychological motives to its repetition, related to the declining status of Nasrid rule at the time.

The repetition of the motto “There is no victor but Allah”, along with short declaratory statements such as “Glory to Allah”, “Eternity to Allah”, creates a conceptual atmosphere with a message that reverberates throughout the space. It becomes a choir, oratorio, declaiming repeatedly with an audio-visual resonance. The walls “speak” to the people and address occupants directly. This communication between building and audience exalts the visitor to active participant, a required ingredient for the whole visual repertoire.

This active audiovisual interaction at the Alhambra reaches a climax when the visitor observes verses from contemporary Andalusian poets on many walls of the complex and on the alabaster basin of its renowned Fountain of the Lions. These court poets were known for their prolific artistic abilities: Ibn al-Jayyab (1274-1349), Ibn al-Khatib (1313-1375), and Ibn Zamrak (1333-1393). The poems combine praise and glorification of the Caliph with eloquent descriptions of the beauty of the building itself. They rhapsodize about the festivities and describe the nobility of the official activities of the *diwan*.

Amazingly and unexpectedly, such descriptions are sometimes recited on behalf of the building itself, where “she”, “the building”, exults joyfully about her beauty, like an attractive young bride addressing her audience. An example of such self-proclaimed beauty is Ibn Zamrak’s verse on the arch and wall of

the private apartment known as the Lindraja balcony (from the Arabic *‘Ain dar ‘Aisha*, “eye of ‘Aisha’s apartment”; ‘Aisha was the name of a wife of the Prophet Muhammad):

Every artist has conferred on me his splendid  
aesthetics.  
Granting me his opulence and perfection  
He who sees me— will know the radiance of a newly  
wedded bride.  
He who contemplates me— will be enveloped in my  
splendor.  
He will embrace the moon through my luminous  
reflection and crown of light.

The Alhambra complex brings forth a new form of art that integrates pictorial rendering, textual narratives, colorful ingenuity, skillful craftsmanship, and the use of natural light and atmosphere. Other leading examples of Islamic oratorical architecture in Andalusia include the Great Mosque of Cordoba; the Bab al-Mardum Mosque in Toledo, which was converted to the Ermita del Cristo de la Luz; the Great Mosque of Seville, which was converted to the Cathedral of Santa Maria de la Sede; the Alcazar complex in Seville; and Madinat al-Zahra’ in Cordoba.

The oratorical trend in Islamic architecture produced by creative use of calligraphic composition was so powerful during the 12<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> centuries that it was esteemed by Christian authorities and artists in many locations, especially in Italy. Italian artists used Arabic text as a decorative motif but also as a signifier of high culture in their paintings and on the interior of some churches— although many Western art historians dismissed this as merely imitative decoration and called it “pseudo-Arabic”.

# Echoing Thoughts

by Benita Adoghe

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I closed my eyes to sleep tonight and I dreamed of being somewhere else than being here at this moment. I dreamed of being someone else other than “one of the girls” kidnapped in Chibok, Maiduguri, Nigeria. I dreamed of living a normal life, being free, living freely and chasing my dreams. But every day I wake up to the stark reality that my dreams may never materialize and that I am mentally stuck in nothing more than wishful thinking.

I woke up today like I do every day in chains since I got abducted. I have perpetual bruises from the shackles fastened to my wrists and ankles. In this place, hostility is the order of the day and kindness is nothing but a figment of imagination. This place is so different from home— I miss my home so much, I miss papa and mama and the love and kindness they showered me with daily. I miss playing with my friends. I miss going to school and I miss doing school and home work. Even though going to the farm was my least favorite thing to do— I miss it.

How my life has changed! I have witnessed girls my age being brainwashed to become suicide bombers, and they never returned. I have also watched those who refused these inhumane tasks being used as deterrents to others— they either get shot or tortured till they give up the ghost. I am raped daily by different men, and I do not have the right over my body and I cannot say no. I refused on several occasions, but I get brutalized and I still get raped. So now I have resigned to fate and just lie there in oblivion. My innocence has been stolen from me never to be retrieved. I am a living shadow of my once cheerful and bright self.

I and the other girls are objects of pleasure to our captors. They derive pleasure in taking turns at our detriment, not minding our non-healing physical, emotional and psychological scars. I go to sleep every day hoping and praying to wake up to my old reality; it was not so great a reality, but it is a far better reality compared to this.



Photo: Adam Ferguson, *New York Times* (Apr. 12, 2018)

Rahab Ibrahim, above, was one of the 276 girls who were kidnapped from the Government Secondary School in Chibok, Nigeria, and held hostage in 2014. She and more than 100 other survivors now attend the American Univ. of Nigeria. The kidnapping was carried out by Boko Haram (now called the Islamic State in West Africa), a militant organization of Sunni jihadists based in northeastern Nigeria.

My level of hope drastically reduces daily. So much time has passed. Most of the girls raped have become mothers. Not every girl survives the pains of childbirth because there are no hospitals where they can get the necessary medical attention. I have watched girls die during childbirth. The responsibility of raising the child is then bestowed on any girl. She is obviously a child herself: how can a child raise another child?

I ponder daily if we will ever be found? If we will ever be rescued? If we will ever return home? And if so, will we be able to forget the horrors we have lived these past months or maybe year— I have completely lost track of time. I do not want to die here, I wish someone out there can hear my thoughts and come to our rescue. I do not know how long I can hold on or when I will run out of luck, because dying out here is more likely than

*continued on next page*



## Finding Sikhism *continued from page 14*

The tenth *guru*, Gobind Singh, completed the book *Guru Granth Sahib* by adding the hymns written by his father. Before his death he decreed that he would be the last of the human *gurus* of the Sikhs. The guruship was then transferred to the holy book itself, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, representing the power of the Eternal Teacher, the one who brings the light of truth into the darkness of ignorance.

### Harmony with the Divine

I have been blessed with knowing wonderful friends and acquaintances from seven different religions or belief systems— Sikh, Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist. Some I consider saints, although they would be chagrined at the label. The beauty of *Sikhi* is that I do not have to “convert” any of them. If anything, their virtues should convert me to being more virtuous, more in tune with God’s grace. I can study and appreciate all of the truth in their belief systems without fear or hate.

After an evening of study with an unusually small group of my Taoist friends, I took them up for the first time to our prayer room where we have the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Punjabi version that my husband reads from. I prayed for guidance and opened it at random, a daily occurrence for Sikhs after their morning ablution (washing) and prayers. I asked my husband to translate. One of the friends, who is a “sensitive” (someone with paranormal powers), told us later that as my husband was reading and translating, he experienced the book as alive and breathing. I was not surprised: it is alive with the wonderful expression of that aspect of the divine, the eternal Teacher/Guru.

Let me share what we read that very special night. The following lines are from a hymn composed by the fourth *guru*, Ram Das, who was a poor orphan selling roasted chickpeas on the street when he first met Guru Amar Das and became his disciple. He, and all of the other *gurus* who composed hymns, called themselves “Nanak” because they were composing from the energy of the eternal teacher, WaheGuru, wonderful God that inspired the first Nanak.

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace Of The True Guru: The Jewel of the Lord’s Name abides within my heart; the Guru has placed His hand on my forehead. The sins and pains of countless incarnations have been cast out. The Guru has blessed me with the Naam, the Name of the Lord, and my debt has been paid off. ||1|| O my mind, vibrate the Lord’s Name, and all your affairs shall be resolved. The Perfect Guru has implanted the Lord’s Name within me; without the Name, life is useless. Without the Guru, the self-willed manmukhs are foolish and ignorant; they are forever entangled in emotional attachment to Maya. They never serve the feet of the Holy; their lives are totally useless. ||2|| Those who serve at the feet of the Holy, their lives are made fruitful, and they belong to the Lord. Make me the slave of the slave of the slaves of the Lord; bless me with Your Mercy, O Lord of the Universe. ||3|| I am blind, ignorant and totally without wisdom; how can I walk on the Path? I am blind - O Guru, please let me grasp the hem of Your robe, so that servant Nanak may walk in harmony with You.

My humble wish is that we bond together in the spirit of harmony with the divine so that we may walk in virtue, and that the arc of our lives may end in the rainbow of divine grace.

More information on Sikhism can be found on the website <http://www.sikhnet.com>.

## Echoing Thoughts *continued from page 35*

the hope of being rescued. I am slowly fading away, and soon I may be no more. This is not how I want my story and the story of the other girls to end— but I am completely helpless and cannot escape, as death awaits anyone who makes an attempt to leave this camp.

At this point, I have two choices: to completely resign to the fate of never returning home, or to linger in hope that someday soon, I and the other girls will be rescued and someday I will share our story with the world. I choose the latter and will linger in hope. As far as I am alive there is hope I will be rescued.



This poster, “Bring Back Our Girls Now”, was created in the Fall 2016 semester by Schoolcraft student Alicia Smith of Inkster, MI, as a class project in Computer Graphics Technology 226 (Digital Imaging 2 with Photoshop), taught by Prof. Michael Mehall. #BringBackOurGirls was the hashtag demanding the safe return of those who were kidnapped in Chibok, Nigeria.

## Little Dresses for Africa:

# “We plant the seeds; God sends the harvest”

by Janice Ford

*Janice Ford, of Canton, MI, is a member of the Editorial Committee for this magazine. She is an alumna of Central Michigan Univ. and an engineer, now retired from Ford Motor Co. Janice is active with several organizations, including Education First (EF) High School Exchange Year and the Novi Oaks Charter Chapter of the American Business Women's Association.*

Earlier this year I met Rachel O'Neill, the founder of a local Christian organization called Little Dresses for Africa. The group annually ships and hand-delivers hundreds of thousands of newly-sewn clothes (girl's dresses and boy's britches) to needy areas in Africa. As I write this, Rachel and her team have just returned from Malawi, in East Africa, a trip that was reported by Chris Jansing on NBC-TV.

Little Dresses for Africa ([www.littledressesforafrica.org](http://www.littledressesforafrica.org)) was born as a result of Rachel's Christian beliefs. After a 50<sup>th</sup>-birthday trip with her husband to a safari in Africa, and then a mission trip back to the continent, she felt compelled to make a difference in that part of the world. Rachel does not sew clothes herself, and at first she just wanted to provide some dresses for a few girls that she had met. But Little Dresses for Africa, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is now celebrating its 10-year anniversary!

Volunteers gather on the second and fourth Thursday of every month to go through the donations and package them for shipping. When I volunteered to help, I witnessed people driving from as far away as Virginia and Chicago to bring clothes that they had made to “The Love Shack”, as Rachel calls her little warehouse in Brownstown, MI, downriver from Detroit. The volunteers, young and old, are very dedicated in producing these clothes or in helping to sort them so that they can be boxed and ready to ship in containers. According to Rachel, one such contributor, a Miss Lillian of Iowa, was determined to make 1,000 dresses to donate to Little Dresses for Africa by the time she turned 100. Miss Lillian surpassed her goal and actually made 1,234 dresses before she passed away on the eve of her 101<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Many of the volunteer dress makers consider this their way to answer God's call, one dress at a time. They can rely on a sewing pattern that the group provides, which is adapted to starting with a pillow case, or they can use their own imagination to design a basic dress, even from a simple piece of cloth. Some of them do the

sewing as individuals, while others belong to church groups or other humanitarian organizations. The outfits are shipped in 40-foot containers or else distributed during brief mission trips. Rachel and her staff try to make such trips to Africa annually in order to keep in touch with what's happening “on the ground”. They stay near the people whom they are helping, and work hard to blend in and be respectful of the culture.

The tag line of Little Dresses for Africa is, “We're not just sending dresses, we're sending hope.” Rachel believes that even a small idea, such as making a dress from a pillow case, can help change lives. She wanted to aid the most vulnerable, typically the young girls of the poorer nations. Her dream was to put the dresses on a child and look her in the eye and tell her that she is valuable and worthy. Now, her group is a global humanitarian effort, with people from across the planet involved in making the clothes. As a result of the donations of clothes and money, the organization has delivered 8 million little dresses (and also britches) to 87 countries, 47 of those being in Africa and the others located where the need is also great, especially Latin America (notably the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico).

In addition to providing clothes, the organization pursues other charitable goals in the same villages, focused on clean water, education, and community. The tangible projects have included building water wells, schools, distribution centers, a sewing center in Malawi, and a hostel to house young girls rescued from child marriages.

A local group of women to which I belong is working with Rachel and Little Dresses for Africa to host a fundraising dinner in conjunction with the group's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The event is scheduled for Sep. 29 at the Woodlands Golf Course in Wayne, MI. More information can be found at <http://www.littledressesforafrica.org/blog>.





# West African Spirits, World-Class Literature

by Randy K. Schwartz (Editor)

The indigenous religions of West Africa are not well known by people in North America, yet they have helped shape some of the greatest world literature.

First published in 1958, **Chinua Achebe's** *Things Fall Apart* (Penguin Books, 2018) is set in a village of yam farmers and goat herders in what is now southeastern Nigeria in the late 1800s, just before and after the arrival of Christian missionaries and other British colonials. The traditional religion of the Igbo people of the region is known as *Odinani*. There is a god of all things, *Chineke*; lesser deities, such as *Ani*, the earth goddess; natural spirits who manifest *Chineke*; and each individual has a personal god or guardian spirit, *chi*. In the course of the story, we see the role of oracles, diviners, healers, food offerings, sacrifices of animals, and the veneration of ancestors. At one point, the central character Okonkwo and his family are exiled from the village for seven years to appease gods that he has offended in the death of a child. We also see how traditional *Odinani* beliefs and practices begin to crumble in the face of Western influence.

The Yoruba people inhabit southwestern Nigeria and nearby parts of Benin and Togo; their traditional religion and language are also called Yoruba. (The religion has also influenced Afro-Latin spiritual beliefs such as *Santería*, *umbanda*, and *candomblé*.)

- *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (Grove Press, 1993) is a collection of stories written by **Amos Tutuola** in the 1950s. The main character is a boy, abandoned by his family, who flees when armed slave traders approach his village. He runs into the bush, or wilderness, not yet aware of the powerful ghosts (spirits) who live there and who would endanger the life of a mere mortal.
- First written in 1938 by Yoruba chief **Daniel O. Fagunwa**, *Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* (City Lights Publishers, 2013) has now been translated by Yoruban novelist and Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka. When a young man ventures into the forest, he sees that the physical world is permeated not only by natural but also by supernatural beings. We learn with him that each person's thoughts and actions interact with all other creatures. Every human must grow in spiritual consciousness

throughout life in order to eventually achieve transcendence and consummate a union with their *orun*, or spiritual self.

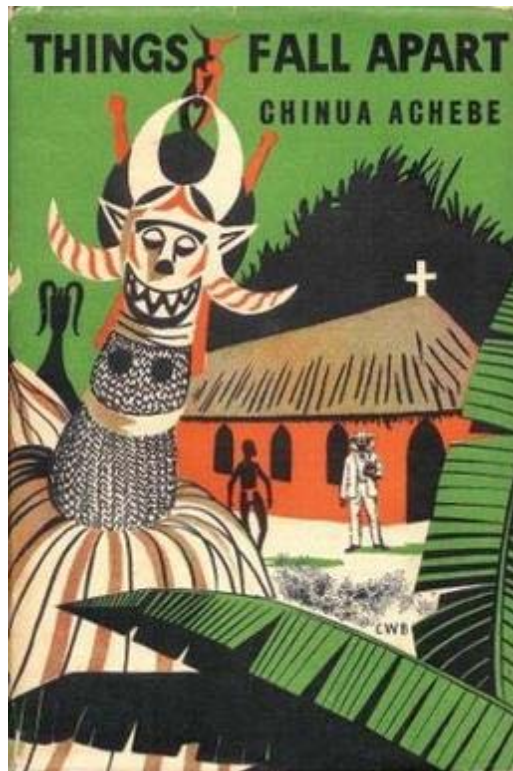
- In Yoruba belief, a child who dies before puberty is an *abiku*, or spirit-child; it is believed that after death, the spirit returns to the same mother to be reborn, and that this cycle can occur multiple times. **Ben Okri's** *The Famished Road* (Anchor, 1993), which won the 1991 Man Booker Prize, is the story of Azaro, an *abiku* living in a big-city ghetto. His sibling spirits send many emissaries trying to drag him back to the world of spirits, but Azaro stubbornly refuses because he loves his mother, who is a street peddler, and his father, a menial laborer aspiring to be a boxer.

**Marcel Griaule's** *Conversations with Ogotemmêli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1988) is a classic of anthropology, originally published in 1948. Griaule and his teams of French ethnographers carried out decades of fieldwork in West Africa and had learned the native languages there. This book is the distillation of his 33-day conversation with Ogotemmêli, a sagacious male elder and blind hunter in a village of peasant-warriors of the Dogon people. In this dry, mountainous region of the Upper Niger River Valley (now in Mali) that was one of the last to come under French colonial rule, they conversed about the Dogon's cosmology and their classification of things, and about Dogon myths, signs and symbols, masks, rituals, cults, the dead, ancestral spirits, sacrifices, redemption, the sacred role of women, the significance of various arts and crafts, and more.

One of the interesting aspects of **Alex Haley's** 1976 historical novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (Da Capo Press, 2018), is how it portrays a succession of religious beliefs across generations within one family. Before he is captured and brought to America in chains, Kunta Kinte is a devout

Muslim growing up in the 1700s among the Mandinka people in what is now The Gambia. We also see the indigenous traditional beliefs of many people in his river village, Juffure; it was a spiritual system that had arisen centuries before the coming of Islam. Later, in Virginia, Kunta marries a fervent Christian, Bell, an enslaved cook of their master, Dr. Waller. Haley portrays these varied religions not simply as individual spiritual experiences, but also as markers of particular cultures and communities that continued to evolve over time.

Incidentally, an estimated 10-15% of the Africans brought to America as slaves were Muslim. Recently, a Columbia Univ. undergraduate from Bahrain who was touring historical Muslim sites in Manhattan commented to a reporter: "Back home, we think of America as a country that Muslims have only recently immigrated to. And nobody learns about the fact that Muslims were here since the beginning, since the first time people came to this country" (Sharon Otterman, "Harlem's Muslim History Is 'Being Erased.' She's Trying to Keep It Alive", *New York Times*, Aug. 13, 2018).



# The African Democracy Project

## A University Model for Studying Democracy

by Irvin D. Reid

*Dr. Irvin D. Reid is President Emeritus of Wayne State University in Detroit (1997-2008), and previously was President of Montclair State in Montclair, NJ (1989-97). He is currently the Eugene Applebaum Chair in Community Engagement, and Director of the Forum on Contemporary Issues in Society (FOCIS), at WSU. In these roles, he works to build stronger ties between the city of Detroit and the university's intellectual resources, while focusing on issues in regional economic development, children and families, education, health, and international cooperation. Dr. Reid earned master's and Ph.D. degrees in business and applied economics from the Univ. of Pennsylvania, and bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from Howard Univ.*



The Fall 2009 class of the WSU African Democracy Project in the office of Mozambique's former president, Joaquim Chissano, in the capital, Maputo.

In 2009 Wayne State University inaugurated the African Democracy Project (ADP), a program of the institution's Forum on Contemporary Issues in Society. For more than 10 years, the ADP was offered in collaboration with the university's Irvin D. Reid Honors College and Journalism Institute for Media Diversity. The college and the institute are at the forefront of the university's efforts to support democracy globally by highlighting the importance of civic engagement to students' educational experiences and by encouraging students to explore the diverse political and societal viewpoints of citizens throughout the world.

In 2007, I learned that a new award had been established to recognize emerging democracies in Africa. The first recipient of the award, given by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, was Mozambique's former president, Joaquim Chissano.

I immediately contacted the Chissano Foundation about a possible meeting to discuss a project I had in mind. An affirmative reply came quickly. In Nov. 2008, I visited Chissano in Maputo, Mozambique's capital. We were joined by the foundation's executive director, Leonardo Simão, in the former president's private library.

I told them about my desire to bring American students to their country. Simão, who had been foreign minister in the Chissano administration, suggested bringing a group to Mozambique during the 2009 presidential election. This was precisely the kind of involvement I wanted for my students.

That visit was the beginning of the African Democracy Project. Several faculty colleagues and I set out to design the first experience, a yearlong course called the African Democracy Project/Mozambique (ADPM). We enrolled a diverse group of 12 students and began the course in Aug. 2009.

We thought long and hard about how students learn about the rest of the world, and how that learning can affect them. For most of us, Africa is remote—but it is not irrelevant. We are

better persons over time because we relate to fellow citizens of the world. This is the lesson about our own democracy that I wanted our students to learn from insight into the democracies of others.

Since its inception, ADP has drawn upon multidisciplinary teams of faculty and students from many different departments to develop or propose a model for examining the development of democracy. One such model in our original conception was the Ibrahim Foundation's Ibrahim Index, which uses five categories to determine the quality of the processes and outcomes of governance: citizen participation in the selection of leaders; safety and security; a system of justice; provision for the public welfare; and a sustainable economy for development. The Ibrahim Index is the most comprehensive collection of qualitative and quantitative data that assess governance in Africa.

### Fragile Democracy in Mozambique

Former president Chissano entered the conference room of the Chissano Foundation in Maputo to the voices of 12 WSU students singing "Happy Birthday".

I felt an extraordinary sense of pride in what we had accomplished since my visit to the former president less than a year earlier. Here we were with the man I considered to be the "John Adams" of Mozambique.

Chissano was second president of Mozambique for 19 years, leaving office in February 2005. During the 1960s he represented Frelimo, the Mozambique independence movement, in Paris. He went on to fight in the Mozambican War of Inde-

*continued on next page*



## African Democracy *continued from page 39*

pendence against the Portuguese colonial government.

Mozambique gained its independence in 1975. Chissano, then foreign minister, became president in 1986 when first President Samora Machel's aircraft crashed in South Africa. In the election of 1999, he defeated the former rebel leader Afonso Dhlakama, head of the opposition party Renamo. (Incidentally, Dhlakama and Renamo were responsible for the deaths of more than a million people during Mozambique's post-colonial civil war.) Chissano chose not to run for a third term in 2004, although the constitution allowed it.

At a ceremony in London on Oct. 22, 2007, Chissano's 68<sup>th</sup> birthday, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced that the former president had been awarded the inaugural \$5 million Prize for Achievement in African Leadership. This award was designed to be given annually by the Ibrahim Foundation to a former African leader who has shown good governance and a commitment to democracy.

The 12 WSU students in our ADPM class represented America in many ways, but in none as much as in their diversity. In the Chissano Foundation's conference room, the former president spoke to them about Mozambique, focusing more on its history than on democracy. Eventually he touched on the country's early attempts to establish democracy, and then multiparty democracy.

As the discussion continued, our students grew skeptical as to whether Mozambique was a true democracy. Chissano acknowledged this skepticism from the West because of the dominance of the Frelimo party in both pre- and post-multiparty elections. As the country approached election day on Oct. 28, 2009, one point was clear to me and our students: There would be no change because there would be no transition of power. There was no bold new policy, no vigorous new leader, no reaching out to the multiparty democracy to which Chissano had committed preceding the 1994 election. While Mozambique, like many other African countries, had multiple parties, only Frelimo had won an election.

There was exhaustion but exhilaration among our students at the completion of the African Democracy Project/Mozambique in Dec. 2009. My own feelings were satisfaction and pride for what my faculty colleagues and I had accomplished. We took a diverse class of mostly undergraduate students to an African country that was at the early stages of development in its practice of democracy. They had studied diligently for nearly two months, taking on the challenges of heavy readings, visiting lecturers, films, and their own blogging. After some initial meetings that I had arranged on their behalf, they had made their own appointments with prominent and ordinary citizens of Mozambique in preparation for observing the presidential election.

In Spring 2010 I interviewed our ADPM students to get their perspective on the course and how they had been affected



Dr. Irvin D. Reid (left) meets with Festus Mogae, third president of Botswana (1998-2008), in the capital, Gaborone, in Mar. 2009.

by the experience of democracy in Mozambique. I learned several things. First, while my students were indifferent to their own democracy, they were deeply committed to understanding democracy in Mozambique; second, after the course they were more circumspect about what democracy meant to them and more analytical of democracy both here and in Mozambique; third, while each student highly anticipated their visit to Mozambique, none anticipated the transformative experiences they had; fourth, more than half the students had some notion of continuing their contact with Africa.

### Stable Democracy in Botswana

The Ibrahim Foundation's recognition of Chissano was followed by the announcement that Festus Mogae, third president of Botswana (1998-2008), would be the next award recipient. In March 2009 I traveled to Gaborone, Botswana's capital, to meet with the former president and with representatives of the Univ. of Botswana to discuss how Botswana could be the site of our next student visit.

In the first course on Mozambique we had had no baseline of what students thought or perceived about African democracy. In Botswana we corrected this. As I sat with the students of the African Democracy Project/Botswana one-on-one, I was interested in what they really knew or thought about democracy. I had encountered them as a group once before, over a "traditional" African dinner at my home.

Now, with only a video camera between us, I urged each of them to talk about the impending course and reflect on democracy in general, their own democracy, and what each of them thought about African/Botswanian democracy. I wanted their very first perspective on Africa.

Several things became clear: Few had any exposure to Africa, and those who did agreed that their information was primarily stereotypes learned from the popular media. A significant number had heard of Africa only from a single news event. Two had actually lived in an African country, albeit before age 10. Two had written papers on Africa in previous classes; another had written a significant paper on Ghana.



The African Democracy Project students observed voting lines such as these during the elections in Liberia, Fall 2011.

The general lack of sophistication about things “African” was not surprising. What was surprising was that overall, the students struggled with the concept of democracy, and struggled even more with how a democratic country such as Botswana was different from the West. They knew with certainty that it was. But how?

By the end of the first class, however, the course’s readings had had a huge impact on their views of democracy— African or otherwise. They had begun to focus on their own issues about democracy. They had begun to see real issues with Botswana’s government in its treatment of the Bushmen in the Kalahari Game Reserve; they also had come to deal with concepts of democracy they had heard in their own homes.

After just one week, the students’ perceptions had changed radically from their work the previous week. When I read some of their blogs it confirmed for me that the greatest learning would be in the honest examination that each was about to undertake of her or his own perception of democracy, regardless of where it was. How should we judge democracies? How do we recognize a thriving one? We challenged our students to think about the difference between Botswanian democracy and Western concepts.

When we eventually left Botswana, I was still marveling over what a peaceful, civil place it is. Botswana achieved independence without a civil war, revolution, insurgency, or anything like that. Independence without violence? Multiparty elections and no violence to persuade the British to leave? A remarkable achievement! Yet Botswana had several parties but only one had won the presidency.

#### Disputed Elections in Liberia

The third course under the ADP model took place in Liberia. It focused on national elections, as in the case of Mozambique.

A few days before the general election of Oct. 11, 2011, I arrived in Liberia with nine students, two graduate assistants,

and a two-man documentary camera crew. We were in Monrovia for the republic’s second elections since its second brutal civil war had ended. In addition to meetings with governmental and non-governmental officials, our students spoke with ordinary citizens who were wounded in war, punished for not participating, or

otherwise abused for their failure to take sides.

In 2006, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf had become the first elected president of Liberia and the continent’s first female president. From Aug. to Nov. 2011, Liberia stumbled through three referenda on various topics. In the general election on Oct. 11, no candidate won a majority. This required a run-off between the top two candidates— a run-off in which the challenger refused to participate, disputing the fairness of the first round of voting. Nevertheless, the second round of voting was held, and Sirleaf was elected to her second term. The 2011 elections may not have been democracy as we idealize it, but voting did take place.

Our students were confronted by many new experiences in Liberia, several lessons in history, and many seeming contradictions. First, one might argue that Liberia has always been a democracy. The country was originally settled by freed slaves and other black free men from the United States, who left in the years before the Civil War to find a place back in the African homeland. The people are much like us and *wanted* to be like us. The Liberian flag— except for missing 49 stars and two stripes— looks exactly like ours.

#### From Foreign Soil: A New Way to Look at Things

Following Liberia, the ADP conducted study opportunities for WSU students in Namibia, Tanzania, and twice in Ghana. From 2009 through 2016, more than 100 graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and staff members participated in seven study-abroad courses through ADP during which they met with voters, dissenters, legislators, and others. They also met with their counterparts on university campuses and professors in classrooms. But their common transformative experience was the opportunity to reflect on their own democracy here at home.

What evolved in our students’ perceptions was a new way to look at things, namely, judging what is truly democratic and what a democracy is. They understood for the first time that we do not have all of the answers or solutions. They stood on the continent of Africa and knew that their connection was deep, varied, and pervasive. In many ways they saw themselves as coming home and seeing that home for the first time. •



# No, We Don't Want to Talk about Race, But We Must and We Must Learn How!

by Rheta N. Rubenstein

*Dr. Rheta Rubenstein is a mathematics education specialist who retired at the Univ. of Michigan-Dearborn in 2016. A native Detroiter, her teaching career also included stints at public schools in Detroit, at the Univ. of Windsor, and at Schoolcraft College (1996-2001). Rheta is an avid reader and contributor for International Agenda; her most recent previous article was "Thailand: The Motorcycle Diaries" (Fall 2015). She and her husband Howard now live in Ridgefield, WA.*

Ijeoma Oluo,  
*So You Want to Talk about Race*  
New York: Seal Press, 2018

Talking about race in America is very hard... especially between black and white people. Some authors have even written about why they are curtailing these conversations. (See, for example, the book *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge, and the Internet posting "To the White Woman I Can No Longer Be Friends With" by Tenaja Jordan.)

Not so Ijeoma Oluo. She is taking on the challenge, not only of talking about race, but talking about how (and how not) to do so. Her book *So You Want to Talk About Race* acknowledges up-front how hard these conversations are, how badly they can go wrong, and how important they are. They are important because we live in a country where structural racism is endemic. Jobs, education, businesses, housing, health, arts, our (in)justice system—all aspects of our lives are white-dominant.

Racism is not merely a matter of individual actions like politeness, or institutional actions like affirmative action; racism is in the DNA of our country through unspoken assumptions and ways that everything is structured. Eddo-Lodge notes, "[Racism] is not just about personal prejudice, but the collective effects of bias. It... has the power to drastically affect people's life chances." As one huge example, we have learned recently how deeply racism affects the health of African Americans (see "Being Black in America Can Be Hazardous to Your Health" by Olga Khazan, *The Atlantic*, Jul.-Aug. 2018). All whites are recipients, willingly or not, of white privilege. Our society maintains, protects, and privileges white people and seeks to control and limit the lives of black people (and other minorities) as separate and unequal.

Oluo writes directly, succinctly, and emotionally. She introduces chapters with stories from her personal experience, and she opens readers' eyes and minds to levels of being that are invisible and often misunderstood. She provides straight, clear information and vocabulary so we can communicate about

issues. Then she gives specific steps, a sort of 'how to' primer for both black and white people, around specific communication difficulties.

For example, are you familiar with 'tone policing?' I wasn't. Oluo explains, "Tone policing is when someone (usually the privileged person) in a conversation or situation about oppression shifts the focus of the conversation from the oppression being discussed to the way it is being discussed. Tone policing prioritizes the comfort of the privileged person... over the oppression of the disadvantaged person." Imagine being in the heat of a discussion and the topic shifts from the substance to the volume of your voice or your expression of strong feelings. For the person trying to make a point, this move significantly undercuts them.

As another example, a topic that I had heard about but had not thought deeply about is 'micro-aggressions'. Oluo explains, "Microaggressions are small daily insults and indignities perpetrated against marginalized or oppressed people because of their affiliation with that... group.... Microaggressions are more than just annoyances. The cumulative effect of these constant reminders that you are 'less than' does real psychological damage. Regular exposure to microaggressions causes a person of color to feel isolated and invalidated. The inability to predict where and when a microaggression may occur leads to hypervigilance, which can then lead to anxiety disorders and depression." She goes on to explain why they are hard to address in daily life, and what they sound or look like. Then, if you are the minority person, she offers steps to follow-up and, if you are the aggressor, what to do in order not to hurt others.

Other topics that Oluo addresses include 'cultural appropriation', 'model minority', and 'intersectionality'. I was deeply ill-informed about these phenomena and learned a great deal from this book. Oluo definitely illustrates that having language to identify behaviors helps in talking about them.

This was a difficult book to put down. It is written so engagingly and is so filled with truth, honesty, caring, humor, and valuable information, that I read it rather quickly. Being a library book, it needs to be in others' hands soon. I have now bought my own copy so I can reread it and share it.

I was particularly taken with the chapter on schools, my lifelong passion. Oluo writes, "It is our job to... trust that if we would just stop trying to control [youth] and instead support them, they will eventually find their way." I wish she would write a book specifically for parents and teachers.

In Oluo's last chapter she goes beyond talking to action. As in earlier chapters, she is specific and imperative: Vote local, bear witness, speak up in unions, get into schools, support arts by people of color, work on police reform, and other strategies. Her voice remains strident, eloquent, and valuable. I highly recommend this book by a strong, smart Seattle social-justice activist.

# Koshien

by Miles Brown

*Liberal arts student Miles Brown of Farmington Hills, MI, wrote this story last Winter, which was his final semester at Schoolcraft College before transferring to Wayne State Univ. in Detroit. His essay "The Power of Art: The Early 'New German Cinema'" appeared in our last issue. Miles told us, "This story is about Koshien, a high school baseball tournament in Japan. I wrote it as a story because I thought it would be a bit more interesting than writing an essay. Various facts about the traditions and peculiarities of Koshien are inserted throughout the story to inform and entertain."*

The lights glared down on him oppressively, as he picked up the bat, stood up, and nervously entered the box. He carefully positioned himself in the dirt, futilely took a few deep breaths to calm his racing heart, and tightened the grip of his shaking hands around the bat. The Okayama hero, Yoshiyuki Makoto, now stood ready for the final pitches of the night. It was the seventh inning of the semifinals round of the Japanese National High School Baseball Championship—otherwise known as the Summer Koshien—and Okayama San-yo was down 2-1 against Kyoto Seisho. The previous batter had managed to get on first base with a bunt, but Okayama still needed one good hitter to prevent a loss, and Makoto was the best hitter.

He was the star of the team, and he was entirely aware of the responsibility that title carried. He was aware of the words of his coaches who said, "There is absolutely nothing but victory." He was aware of what it meant for the city and the disappointment it would bring to everyone if he didn't get the hit, and he knew what it meant to himself. How a victory here would make all the time, injuries, and sacrifices worth it. This wouldn't just be a memory that he would reflect on later in life as he was plunking away at a computer, working a salaryman job, reminiscing on the good times. He had told himself all of this the year before, too, but he'd left the stadium in tears following a bitter 0-3 loss.



There were millions of people watching now on TV, and thousands in the stands. A win here would propel him into the finals, a game equal to, if not greater than, any Japanese Pro League game. A game that would allow him the opportunity to follow the paths of giants like Hideki Matsui and Daisuke Matsuzaka. Maybe one day he would stand shoulder to shoulder with those giants. All of this hinged on one last swing of the bat, one last throw of the ball.

Makoto had been instructed by the entire team to just go for an easy hit to tie, but Makoto was a slugger, and he was aiming for a big hit to close the game. He would reach into hell, save the lost game, and he wouldn't look back. Kyoto was a good fundamentals team, but they had no star players. Getting a good hit against the pitcher wouldn't be too difficult. All these things ran through Makoto's mind in a second, because the very next second the ball would be flying towards him.

Makoto barely had time to register the ball before instinct took over and the bat swung.

"Strike!"

He missed. But unfortunately for the pitcher, this miss had gotten Makoto extremely comfortable. The pressure he'd felt evaporated from him as he clasped his hands together with the bat in the center and pointed toward the sky, as if wielding a sword ready to pierce the fresh evening. The crowd cheered.

*continued on next page*

Kotaro Kiyomiya, of Waseda Jitsugyo High School, belts a double in the 2015 Koshien, the annual Japanese high school baseball championship that was founded a century earlier in 1915. Photo: Baseball Federation of Japan ([www.baseballjapan.org](http://www.baseballjapan.org)), Jul. 29, 2015.



**Koshien***continued from page 43*

Makoto's confidence soared. The pitcher's heart sank. Makoto got himself back into position in the box, and prepared for the next ball. He knew it would be the last.

The pitcher carefully positioned himself on the mound, futilely shook around to relieve his nerves, and tightened his grip on the ball. Uchiyama Takeshi now stood ready to deliver the final pitch of the night. Kyoto was ahead 2-1. Takeshi didn't need to strike the batter out; he just needed him to not get a clean hit. Twice. He nervously looked to his coach for the funny-looking pitching signal. It had always seemed ridiculous to him, receiving signals so serious for something as minor as baseball. But now the full weight of this seriousness was felt by him. The signal prompted an inside pitch.

The pitcher touched his hand to his glove, crossed one leg in front of the other, put his right arm back, and then firmly replanted his ascending leg on the ground. His body and arm whipped, and the ball flew. Yoshiyuki Makoto never saw the ball, but he felt the home run, even before the bat touched the ball. The air around the bat buckled as it traveled, and quaked upon impact with the ball. The ball flew once more, and its trajectory made it clear that the game was in the hands of the left outfielder. Unfortunately for Kyoto, the ball was not.

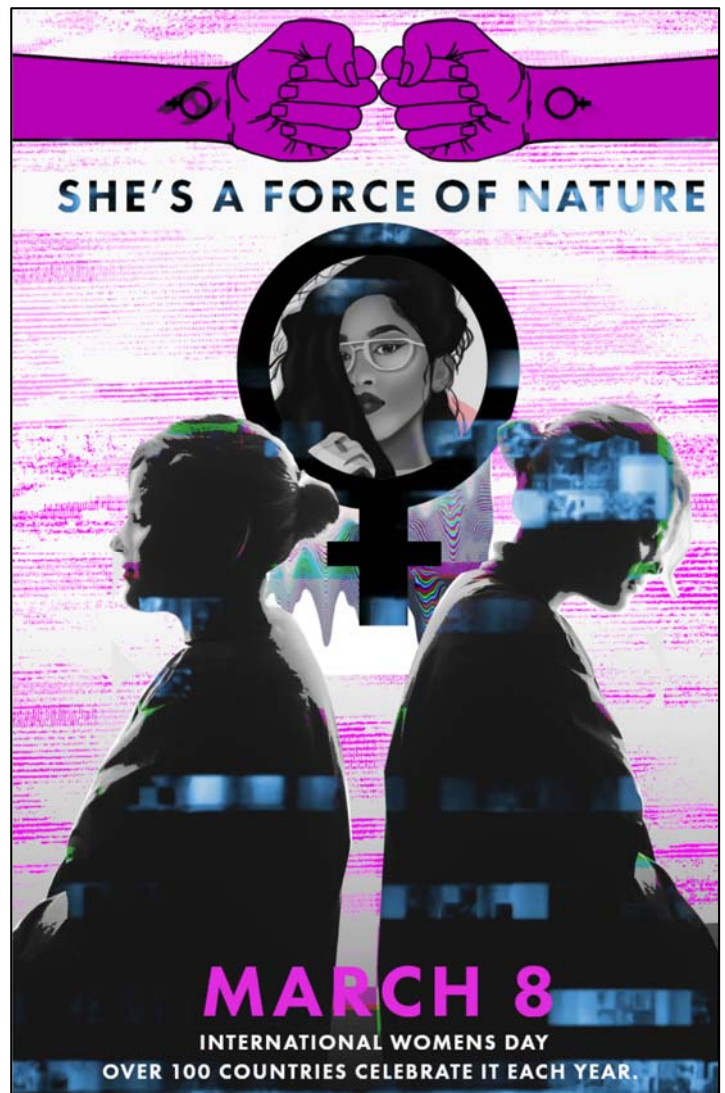
“Pfff.”

The ball had been caught by a 17-year-old high school baseball player. He was in the third row of the stands. The crowd erupted. It was the happiest day of Makoto's life.

It was the worst day of Takeshi's life. He dropped to his knees in disbelief, and lay on mound. The crowd would have deafened him, but defeat had already done so. This was the end of Takeshi's high school baseball career. He was a senior in high school; he could no longer return to this field, and there were no other major tournaments for the season. He was only a role player, so he would never be drafted for the pros. He could play baseball at university, but he would never again see a field so large.

The minutes that passed were unfelt by Takeshi until a coach collected him for lineup. They had to stand by as the winning team sang their school anthem. As he walked, he could see the crying faces of his teammates who were being motioned forward. The smiling faces of the Okayama players, just a few dozen feet in front of him, seemed oppressive. Kyoto was grieving, and Okayama weren't even aware of the funeral in front of them.

As the victors started singing their school anthem, Takeshi looked down at his pants. They were covered in dirt, the same dirt that he and his teammates had grabbed earlier—the seniors to remind themselves that they had been there, the juniors to remind themselves to make it back to this field. This field where Babe Ruth played an exhibition game during his tour of Japan. This field that hosts an amateur event equal to, if not more important than, any pro league game. This field that was the largest stadium in the entire Asian continent when it was completed. This field that had the remarkable ability to make dreams come true, and to end them just as quickly. •



Inspired by International Women's Day last March, Schoolcraft College student Alexionna Bushell created this poster, "She's a Force of Nature", as a class project in Computer Graphics Technology 226 (Digital Imaging 2 with Photoshop), taught by Prof. Michael Mehall. Alex, 20, of Novi, MI, is majoring in 3D Animation, but she's been doing graphic arts since she was 12 years old. She told us, "So far I'm extremely excited for what's ahead. I like to say that I'm inspired by the individuals and events around me— I find inspiration in everything. What keeps me designing is knowing that there are endless possibilities when it comes to creating."

# Report from the Midwest Institute Meeting in Dayton

by Helen Ditouras (SC English Dept.  
and MIIIE Board Member)

This year's annual conference of the Midwest Institute for International and Intercultural Education (MIIE) took place in Dayton, OH, on April 6-7 at Sinclair Community College, a vibrant campus whose faculty has worked with the MIIE for several years. Colleen Pilgrim (SC Psychology Dept.) and I attended the conference, which included outstanding presentations highlighting such themes as global social change, human trafficking, international food studies, health psychology, immigration, and strategic partnerships for international education.

Sinclair itself offers a broad array of international programming, including a robust Study Abroad program. Dr. Katherine Rowell, Prof. of Sociology and Anthropology at Sinclair, has spoken on our campus about race in Costa Rica (Oct. 2014) and about peace and conflict in Mongolia (Apr. 2016); this Fall, she will again deliver a Focus Series presentation (see page 10).

The sixth annual MIIE Contribution Award was presented to Gary L. Hauck, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Montcalm Community College (Sidney, MI), for his notable commitment to the organization as an outstanding MIIE Coordinator and Board Member. Gary, who is retiring from the Board this term, graciously accepted the award and thanked the MIIE for tirelessly promoting global education year after year.

What follows are capsule summaries of notable presentations that I attended.

**1. *Seeking Treatment for Mental Illness in Indonesia and the United States.*** Colleen Pilgrim (Schoolcraft College) noted that mental health problems are a leading global cause of ill health and disability, afflicting roughly one-quarter of the world's people at some point during their lifetimes (WHO, 2017). She discussed her current project, funded through the American Institute for Indonesian Studies (AIFIS), which compares attitudes toward mental health treatment in Indonesia and the U.S. Dr. Pilgrim and her colleagues aim to better understand social stigmas and other factors that might play a role in inducing people to delay or avoid mental health treatment options. She provided details about their survey instrument and research methodologies.

**2. *A Global Perspective on Culture, Nutrition, and Psychology.*** Univ. of Michigan-Dearborn graduate student Sara Kesler focused on how cultural, environmental, and emotional factors often exert greater influence than physical and nutritional health needs in determining an individual's dietary behaviors. She examined issues of food insecurity and the impact of nutrition on stress management, learning, and memory for college students. Ms. Kesler noted that almost half of college students face significant economic obstacles in

meeting their dietary needs, with minority students even more at risk.

**3. *Mental Health Stigmas on College Campuses and Small Ways You Can Make a Difference.*** Univ. of Michigan-Dearborn graduate student Devon Kardel reported that in recent years, more attention has been paid to the mental health of college-aged students. Ms. Kardel, a former founder and president of an Active Minds chapter, discussed the impact of mental health on our campuses. She noted that suicide is the second-leading cause of death among college students. Roughly 25% of students experience mental illness at a clinical level at some point during their time in school, and 73% report a significant mental health crisis (NAMI, 2012). Such problems can seem overwhelming, but there are campus measures that can address them. For example, welcome programs for international students can be modified to consider culture shock, among other stressors.

**4. *Infusion of Food, Cuisine, and Diets into Math Courses.*** Azar Raiszadeh, Prof. of Mathematics at Chattanooga State Community College, described a comparison of the American and Mediterranean diets that was carried out by students in her Introduction to Statistics course. In four groups, they were asked to research various facets of each diet (such as food groups and "pyramids", meat consumption, food allergies, obesity, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and use of GMO foods) and to summarize their findings statistically. Dr. Raiszadeh's aim is to improve students' creativity, critical thinking, literacy, peer collaboration, and writing. In an applicability questionnaire at the end of the course, 83% of the students reported discovering useful connections to real life.

**5. *Understanding International Students in 2-Year Colleges and Strategies for Enhancing Their Learning.*** Meng Lu, Manager of International Admissions at Sinclair Community College, discussed her goal of creating a guide for working with international students that is intentional and actively seeks to integrate international students with their American cohorts. The project is part of a 5-year strategic plan to enroll more international students; the current number is 250 students from places such as Saudi Arabia, China, India, South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Based on tracking student performance at Sinclair, Ms. Lu found that international students are more likely to make the Dean's List than are other students. However, some international students need academic intervention and even end up on academic probation. This can be due to a host of challenges they face: deficiencies in English or academic skills; problems of comprehension; insufficient social/emotional skills; lack of motivation or goal-setting; financial setbacks; stress or time-management problems; and alienation. Ms. Lu suggested that faculty must change their pedagogical styles in order to assist international students with language proficiency, as well as direct them to student support services on campus. She concluded with the following strategies for faculty and administrators: design a freshman experience class for international students, be proactive with academic integrity issues, be empathetic, implement study skills tutorials, and encourage friendships between international students and their domestic peers.

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# It's a Multicultural World— Right in Our Backyard!

See also the listings of events related to "Spirituality and Religion in Today's World" (pp. 10-11).

**Jul. 21 – Oct. 14, 2018:** "Surrealismo: Ojos de México" (Surrealism: Eyes of Mexico), an exhibit about the enduring influence of Surrealism on photography in Mexico. Graphics Gallery, Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint. For more info, call 810-234-1695 or see <http://www.flintarts.org>.

**Aug. 11 – Nov. 25, 2018:** "Beyond Borders: Global Africa", an exhibit of diverse artworks made in Africa, Europe, and the U.S. from the 1800s to the present. It demonstrates the international scope of art from Africa and the African diaspora, and also explores issues such as slavery, colonization, migration, racism, and identity. Taubman Gallery, Univ. of Michigan Museum of Art, 525 South State St., Ann Arbor. For more info, call 734-764-0395 or see <http://www.umma.umich.edu>.



**Sep. 1, 2018:** Farhan Akhtar and the Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy Trio. A concert by these renowned performers, who create Bollywood-style music in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, and English. Orchestra Hall, Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave, Detroit. For info and tickets, call 248-923-1078 or see [www.shilpentertainment.com](http://www.shilpentertainment.com).

**Sep. 9, 2018:** Palestine Cultural Day, a day of culture, education, music, food, and fun organized by the Ramallah Club of Detroit. Free admission; proceeds benefit the Medical Mission of the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine. 12-9 pm. Burton Manor Banquet Hall, 27777 Schoolcraft Rd., Livonia. For more info, call 734-425-1600 or e-mail [detroit@ramallahclubdetroit.com](mailto:detroit@ramallahclubdetroit.com) or visit the FaceBook page, <https://www.facebook.com/events/2008837005856704>.

**Sep. 15, 2018:** "Poetry Through the Ages". An evening of live music, dance, and visual art based on poetry from three eras: Jayadeva (12<sup>th</sup> Century), Rabindranath Tagore (late 19<sup>th</sup>/early

20<sup>th</sup> Century), and contemporary. Part of the Sep. 6 – Oct. 7 Rasa Festival organized in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti by Akshara, a multicultural arts organization. 8-9:30 pm. Arthur Miller Theater, Univ. of Michigan, 1226 Murfin Ave., Ann Arbor. For info and tickets, see <https://rasafestival.org>.

**Sep. 15-16, 2018:** Taiwan Festival. Explore the traditional beauty and modern relevance of Taiwan through a weekend of films, performances, cooking demos, traditional arts and crafts, hands-on shadow puppets, and displays. 12-4 pm. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-833-7900 or see <https://www.dia.org/events/taiwan-festival>.

**Sep. 15-16, 2018:** Sixth annual Ann Arbor Russian Festival, featuring authentic culture, food, entertainment, and shopping. St. Vladimir Orthodox Church, 9900 Jackson Rd., Dexter. For more info, see <http://www.annarborryussianfestival.org>.

**Sep. 23, 2018:** Festival of India, a free festival of music and dance organized by miindia.com. 11 am – 6 pm. Summit on the Park, 46000 Summit Pkwy., Canton. For more info, see <http://www.miindia.com> or e-mail [events@miindia.com](mailto:events@miindia.com).

**Sep. 27 – Nov. 1, 2018:** "The Four Mothers of Hebrew Poetry". The voices of women first emerged in Hebrew poetry in the 1920s. This 6-week program examines the four key trailblazers; their poetry touched on issues of individuality, motherhood, love, sexuality, madness, and loss. Cost: \$65 for JCC members, \$75 for nonmembers. Consecutive Thursdays, 7-9 pm. Henry & Delia Meyers Library and Media Center, Jewish Community Center of Metro Detroit, 6600 W. Maple Rd., West Bloomfield. For info and tickets, contact Francine Menken at 248-432-5546 or [fmenken@jccdet.org](mailto:fmenken@jccdet.org).

**Sep. 28 – Oct. 7, 2018:** "Antigone", Jean Anouilh's play based on the Sophocles tragedy. Ann Arbor Civic Theater, 322 W. Ann St., Ann Arbor. For info and tickets, call 734-971-2228 or e-mail [manager@a2ct.org](mailto:manager@a2ct.org) or see <http://www.a2ct.org>.

**Oct. 5-6, 2018:** Tonda Puppet Troupe. Through a collaboration with Shiga Prefecture, Michigan's sister-state in Japan, the DIA hosts a rare opportunity for American audiences to experience the unique traditions of Japan's Bunraku puppet theater. The Tonda, founded in the 1830s, is one of the best-known puppet troupes in Japan and is a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Treasure. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-833-7900 or see <https://www.dia.org/events/tonda-puppet-troupe>.



## Detroit Film Theatre

Among the presentations kicking off the forthcoming DFT season, the following are set in the regions indicated. This venue is located at the John R. Street entrance to the Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For details and tickets, call 313-833-4005 or visit the website <https://www.dia.org/visit/detroit-film-theatre>.

**Sep. 15-16, 2018:**

“Beyond Beauty: Taiwan From Above”

**Sep. 28-30, 2018:**

“In the Last Days of the City” (Egypt)

**Oct. 13-14, 2018:**

“Coco” (Mexico)

**Nov. 10, 2018:**

Yung Shing Le Shadow Puppet Troupe (Taiwan).

## Northville Library Films

One Monday night each month, the Northville District Library presents a free film in a foreign language with English subtitles. The screenings are at 6:30 pm at 212 West Cady St., Northville, MI. For more info, call 248-349-3020 or see <https://northvillelibrary.org>.

**Aug. 27, 2018:** “The Paris Opera” (French)

**Sep. 24, 2018:** “Bye Bye Germany” (German)

**Oct. 22, 2018:** “Hotel Salvation” (Hindi)

**Nov. 26, 2018:** “In Harmony” (French)

**Oct. 12, 2018:** Navratri Garba celebration with live music and catered dinner. Schoolcraft’s version of the Hindu festival that marks the beginning of Autumn and celebrates the goddess Durga. All proceeds go to the Schoolcraft College Food Pantry to help students in need. Sponsored by the Student Activities Office and the Asian Student Cultural Association. 7-12 pm. VisTaTech Center, Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia. Tickets \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door. For more info, e-mail [sao@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:sao@schoolcraft.edu) or call 734-462-4422.

**Oct. 14, 2018:** The sixth annual Headwrap Expo. The official pre-event for the Globalize Your Mind Women’s Summit (see above, Oct. 14-16), this eclectic and colorful festival brings over 600 people to Michigan to celebrate community, art, faith, spirituality, individuality, and global love. All are welcome to enjoy the live performances, tutorials on the wrapping of scarves, turbans, and other head-wraps (male and female), cultural and historical workshops, interfaith panel discussions, fashion shows, and an artisan marketplace. Presented by Zarinah El-Amin Naeem, Enliven Your Soul, The Knight Foundation, and Beautifully Wrapped; supported by the Arab American National Museum and the Odu’a Organization of Michigan. 12-7 pm. Ford Community & Performing Arts Center, 15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. For more info, see [www.headwrapexpo.com](http://www.headwrapexpo.com).

**Oct. 13-21, 2018:** “Eugene Onegin”. A new production of Tchaikovsky’s most beloved opera, the epitome of Russian Lyric Opera. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. For info and tickets, call 313-237-7464 or see <http://www.motopera.org>.

**Oct. 14-16, 2018:** Globalize Your Mind Women’s Luminary Summit. Do you see all the people struggling in the world and feel called to leverage your skills and connections to do something about it, but aren’t sure what? Join a dynamic group of women achievers, cultural shape-shifters, and impact makers for an immersive experience to help you create and sustain a luminary life, one in which you are deeply connected to yourself and the world. Edward Hotel & Convention Center, 600 Town Center Dr., Dearborn. For more info, see <https://www.globalizeyourmind.com>.

**Oct. 19, 2018:** Migguel Anggelo presents “So Close: Love & Hate”. Through a rich song cycle including an array of new compositions punctuated by Latin classics, American standards, Broadway, opera, and Bjork, the Brooklyn-based, Venezuelan-born dynamo Migguel Anggelo pours his lush voice and enormous soul into an intimate new show addressing divisiveness, humanity, and hope. Co-presented by Culture Lab Detroit. 7:30 pm. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-833-7900 or see <https://www.dia.org/events>.

**Oct. 20, 2018:** “Let’s Naacho!” Bollywood Dance Competition. Organized by the Schoolcraft College Asian Student Cultural Association; all proceeds go to the Schoolcraft College Food Pantry to help students in need. 4-9 pm. Northville High School, 45700 Six Mile Rd., Northville. Tickets \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. For more info, contact Prof. Anna Maheshwari at 734-462-7188 or [amaheshw@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:amaheshw@schoolcraft.edu).

**Nov. 3-14, 2018:** The 67<sup>th</sup> annual Jewish Book Fair, oldest and largest of its kind in the U.S., with authors from Michigan and around the world engaging audiences totaling more than 20,000 people. Jewish Community Center of Metro Detroit, 6600 W. Maple Rd., West Bloomfield. For more info, call 248-661-1900 or e-mail [brobinson@jccdet.org](mailto:brobinson@jccdet.org) or see <http://www.jccdet.org>.

**Nov. 9-11, 2018:** 25<sup>th</sup> annual Ann Arbor Polish Film Festival. Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. For more info, see <http://www.annarborpolonia.com/polish-film-festival>.

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## Multicultural Calendar *continued from page 47*

### University Musical Society

International music, dance, and theatre are featured in the following selections from the UMS season, scheduled at various venues mostly in Ann Arbor. For info and tickets, call 734-764-2538 or see <http://www.ums.org>.

- Sep. 30, 2018:** The National Theatre, London, live in HD, "Julie", a version of August Strindberg's play "Miss Julie"
- Nov. 2, 2018:** Aida Cuevas (Mexican mariachi)
- Nov. 7, 2018:** Jake Shimabukuro (Hawaiian ukulele)
- Dec. 1-2, 2018:** Handel's Messiah (British oratorio)
- Dec. 23, 2018:** The Bolshoi Theatre, live in HD, "The Nutcracker" (Russian ballet).

**Nov. 10-18, 2018:** "The Barber of Seville". This classic Rossini opera tells the story of how Count Almaviva wins the hand of his beloved Rosina with the help of his clever barber, Figaro. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. For info and tickets, call 313-237-7464 or see <http://www.motopera.org>.

**Nov. 11, 2018:** Yung Shing Le Shadow Puppet Troupe. Founded in Taiwan's Mituo District in 1890, this troupe has been a labor of love for the Zhang family. Live music will accompany the performances of "The Sandbag Trilogy", "The Mountain of Flames", and "The Proud Return". Presented by the Detroit Institute of Arts; sponsored by the Michigan Taiwanese American Organization and the Taipei Cultural Office in New York. Tickets are free (limit four per customer), but must be reserved at <http://www.macombcenter.com/our-season/box-office.html>. 2 pm. Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, 44575 Garfield Rd., Clinton Twp. For more info, call 586-286-2141.

**Nov. 24-25, 2018:** "The Nutcracker Ballet". Featuring the Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra, this is Detroit's original Nutcracker, performed the way Tchaikovsky intended. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. For info and tickets, call 313-237-7464 or see <http://www.motopera.org>.

**Nov. 29, 2018:** A Celebration of Italian Art and Cuisine. An elegant strolling dinner with wide-ranging tastes of Italian food, wine, and beverages highlight a memorable evening of art, dining, music, and ambiance. 6-9 pm. Great Hall and Rivera Court, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-833-7900 or visit the website <https://www.dia.org/events>.

**Dec. 23, 2018:** Moscow Ballet's "Great Russian Nutcracker - Dove of Peace Tour". Presenting world class Russian artists, hand-painted sets, Russian Snow Maidens, and a two-dancer Dove of Peace with a 20-foot wingspan. 12, 4, and 8 pm. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-471-6611 or see <http://www.olympiaentertainment.com>.

### MIIE Conference Report *continued from page 45*

**6. Migration: Teaching Palestine and Israel.** Prof. Layla Goushey of St. Louis Community College at Forest Park described an interdisciplinary English course that introduces students to the Palestine-Israel conflict. Her course focuses heavily on academic scholarship and activism, and highlights the way in which this conflict is shaped by differing narratives and frameworks. It examines historical timelines, analyzes relevant economic and security issues, and at the end, students are asked to consider whether a one-state solution is viable or plausible. Prof. Goushey's presentation also included an outline of her lectures; definitions of terms related to migration; and a screening of one of the documentaries that she uses, "Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs, the Iraqi Connection" (2002), which focuses on the *mizrahim* (Oriental Jews) of Iraq and their migration to Israel in the face of Arab nationalism.

**7. Human Trafficking: Global to Local (Keynote Presentation).** Tony Talbott, Interim Executive Director of the Human Rights Center at the Univ. of Dayton, delivered a very thought-provoking keynote address. During his 13 years in the U.S. Navy and the Army National Guard, he had traveled around the world and witnessed the perpetuation of systems of forced labor and prostitution. Returning to Dayton with a thirst to learn more about this oppression, he studied social justice at Wilmington College (a Quaker institution) and soon learned that trafficking is not only global, but also a major problem in Ohio. Talbott outlined the factors involved in human trafficking, as identified by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). He concluded that 200,000 people are trafficked for labor or sex in the U.S., half of them children. The reason for the spike in trafficking is the high rewards (\$150 billion annual revenue) and low risks involved.

**8. Climate Stress and the Arab Uprisings (Keynote Presentation).** Another riveting presentation during the keynote luncheon featured Fadhel Kaboub, Prof. of Economics at Denison Univ. (Granville, OH) and President of the Binzagr Institute for Sustainable Prosperity. Prof. Kaboub argues that climate change is amplifying existing social tensions, economic dislocation, and ethnic divisions. The Middle East, in particular, has seen spikes in water scarcity, droughts, heat waves, desertification, deforestation, air/water/land pollution, and loss of biodiversity. According to Kaboub, water scarcity played a major role in historical conflicts in the Middle East including the 1967 Arab-Israeli War (Jordan River), the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War (Shatt al-Arab River), and more recently, the Syrian War has been prompted in part by massive climate stress from drought. Other regional tensions entailing environmental factors include the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) being built on the Blue Nile, which has aroused concerns downstream in Sudan and Egypt; the 'gas wars' in which Qatar, Iran, and Russia are rivals for natural gas sales to Europe, in part by pipeline through Syria; and the 2011 uprising in Tunisia, which included "bread riots" targeting the scarcity of basic foodstuffs. Kaboub concluded that addressing these conflicts requires establishing renewable energy policies in the region; encouraging sustainable agriculture, water management, conservation, ecotourism, green architecture, and decentralized stewardship; and investing in education and regional trade instead of in global trade competition.