



Annual Report
2022 - 23

Weissberg Program in Human Rights and Social Justice

Empowering students
to take informed action
to address complex
global problems

Beloit
College

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Beloit College thanks the Weissberg Foundation for their generous support of the Weissberg Program in Human Rights and Social Justice.

Learn more about the Weissberg Foundation at weissbergfoundation.org

At left, students on a Global Experience Seminar in Berlin listen to their peer present about the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism.



Intersectionalities: Building our Shared Future

In this grant period, Beloit College leveraged the support of the Weissberg Foundation to launch a year-long exploration of the concept of intersectionality and its impact on equity, justice and human rights. Grappling with complex and far-reaching social challenges is central to the mission of Beloit College, making this year's theme relevant to all corners of the campus and curriculum.

Intersectionality, a term coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, puts a name to the reality of people with overlapping social identities and the systems of oppression, domination and discrimination which compound on such identities. The concept, while broadly used, is often misconstrued, and its application to pressing social issues can go underutilized.

As Beloit College continues to refine its practices of equity, inclusion and anti-racism, this year's focus on intersectionality raised important questions for students and for our institution.

Campus-Based Activities

Weissberg Chair Wayne Au (at left) spent a week in spring 2023 focusing on intersectionality and social justice in K-12 education policy in the United States.

From Incubation to Implementation

Each year's Weissberg Program theme is incubated in a retreat the year prior. The incubation brings together a broad coalition of stakeholders to deepen their understanding of the theme and to imagine how best to bring the topic to the campus, including guest speakers, activities, and courses.

The incubation of Intersectionalities in January 2022 was led by faculty members Dr. Sonya Johnson and Dr. Daniel Barolsky, and included faculty and staff from across the campus. Guest speakers included Dr. David Anderson Hooker, and members of the Weissberg Foundation's executive committee. The retreat spawned rich and nuanced discussions and resulted in a long list of suggested speakers and activities to bring the topic to the whole campus.

In January 2023, Prof. Michael Dango led the retreat focusing on our next theme of Misinformation and Media Literacy in the Digital Age. This retreat, held in Chicago, brought together Beloit faculty and staff, the executive director of the Weissberg Foundation Ricshawn Adkins Roane, and a fellow Foundation grant recipient, LaTwyla Mathias, of Project Virginia. The group prepared for the retreat with readings and videos, and were joined for discussion by several experts on media and misinformation from the University of Chicago.

Ashlyn Sparrow (far right), game designer and Assistant Director of Weston Game Lab at the University of Chicago, discussed misinformation and media literacy at the 2023 incubation retreat in Chicago.



CONNECTING STUDENTS TO MAJOR CHANGE MAKERS AND IDEAS

A cornerstone of the Weissberg Program at Beloit College is the invitation to campus of major ideas, thinkers, and change makers. By engaging students in thoughtful discussion and analysis of key issues with people in the field, the program is able to help students see the value and power of their education toward social change. By meeting change makers in classrooms, lectures and around a meal, and by examining ideas and strategies up close, students are able to demystify and contextualize the work of social justice.



Mariah Parker, Ousley Scholar-in-Residence (above) spoke about her career, parlaying her skills as a hip-hop artist and organizer into working as a county commissioner.

Wayne Au, right, spoke on intersectionality in K-12 education for a live recording of the podcast "The Teachers' Lounge," with reporter Peter Medlin.





Wayne Au, Weissberg Chair, and Intersectionality in K-12 Education

One critical area where the concept of intersectionality has resounding implications is in current issues in educational policy in the United States. To address these issues, Beloit College hosted its 23rd annual Weissberg Chair [Dr. Wayne Au](#).

Dr. Au is professor and interim dean in the School of Educational Studies at University of Washington Bothell. Au has previously served as the interim dean of diversity and equity for the campus and is an editorial board member of Rethinking Schools. His academic interests broadly encompass critical education theory and teaching for social justice. He's the author of books such as [Rethinking Multicultural Education: Teaching for Racial and Cultural Justice](#), [Reclaiming the Multicultural Roots of US Curriculum: Communities of Color and Official Knowledge in Education](#), and [Unequal by Design: High Stakes Testing and the Standardization of Inequality](#).

Dr. Au spent the week in the classroom with students in the Education and Youth Studies and Critical Identity Studies departments. His public addresses included a live recording of the Teachers' Lounge Podcast with regional public radio reporter [Peter Medlin](#), and his keynote address.

Wayne Au, left, delivering his keynote lecture on March 31st, 2023, on "Social Justice in K-12 Education." 65 attended in person, despite a tornado outside, and 35 joined via live stream. Still more listened to the the recorded podcast on WNIJ and online.

Mariah Parker, Ousley Scholar-in-Residence

The annual Ousley Scholar-in-Residence celebrates the legacy of Grace Ousley, Beloit College's first black female graduate. This year's visiting scholar was Dr. Mariah Parker, a linguist, former Athens-Clarke County (Georgia) Commissioner, community organizer, abolitionist, and rapper. Living in/at the intersections as a Black, queer woman, Parker talked with students on civic engagement and transformative politics. Through meals with students, classroom visits, and an inspiring keynote address, Dr. Parker illuminated the interconnections between hip hop and public policy, and how students can bring their life experiences to bear in leadership at every level of power.



Storytelling for Justice - special course based on the National SEED Project

Inspired by her participation in the Incubation Retreat on intersectionalities, Caitlin Rosario Kelly, director of the McNair Scholars Program at Beloit College (serving students underrepresented in higher education who are on a trajectory towards a doctoral degree), offered a special course titled, "*Storytelling for Justice*," based on the [National SEED Project](#). The class addressed the need for and challenges in establishing educational equity and diversity. In their final project, one student wrote, "To be part of a just community for me means to use my words and actions as power, to allow myself and others to be curious and figure out other perspectives and issues, and be okay with challenging them..."



Jaime Cortez
Activism through Creative Writing

In February, faculty in anthropology and creative writing hosted queer Chicana writer, artist and activist [Jaime Cortez](#) (pictured at right) who spoke with students about activism through creative writing and gave a public reading of his collection of short stories. Cortez is author of *Gordo*, which was named a best book of the year by NPR and BookPage, the graphic novel *Sexile* and editor of *Virgins, Guerrillas, and Locas: Gay Latinos Writing about Love*. In the words of Sandra Cisneros, "Jaime Cortez is a wise guy with a wide heart, who sees what 'no one else wants to see.'"



Michael Woldemariam
US Foreign Policy Toward Africa

Beloit College alumnus [Michael Woldemariam'05](#) visited campus in November, returning as the Ivan Stone Lecturer on International Studies. Michael met with students in classrooms and delivered a lecture entitled "US-Africa Relations: New Biden Administration Strategy for Africa," highlighting how nations in Africa occupy an intersectional and marginalized identity of their own.

Woldemariam described the inconsistencies in U.S. policy and attitudes by successive administrations toward (black) African countries and the opportunities and work required to re-establish positive and productive relations.



CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH THE WORLD

Through scholarship and grant opportunities, the Weissberg Program empowers students to take their education beyond classroom and to apply it in the real world, coming face-to-face with pressing issues in human rights and social justice.

Beloit College's SHE-CAN Scholars class of 2023, from left, Voleak Phan'23, Ariane Irafasha'23, and Phidor Kong'23. Ariane and Phidor were recipients of the Weissberg SHE-CAN Scholarship.



Weissberg SHE-CAN Scholarship

Through the Weissberg SHE-CAN scholarship, future female leaders from Cambodia, Guatemala or Rwanda are empowered to study at Beloit College, taking advantage of a rich community of mentors and experiential learning opportunities. This year, three students, [Sochea Chaay'25](#), [Moon Sum'24](#), and [Phidor Kong'23](#) were the recipients of this scholarship. These students are academically strong and enrich the campus discourse around development, culture and leadership. In addition, Sochea took advantage of summer grants to carry out internships in Cambodia, Moon studied abroad in both England and Malta, and Phidor completed her senior year and received the Weissberg Postgraduate Fellowship to continue studying and working on environmental policy in Cambodia over the summer.

In the coming year, Beloit College will receive its first SHE-CAN Scholars from Guatemala, including [Rosemary Roxana Coraxón Xep'27](#), who will be funded by the Weissberg Program. Guatemala is a new partner country for SHE-CAN.

Sochea Chaay'25, right, in white blouse, carried out an internship as an Economic Equity Summer Associate at the Greenlining Institute in Oakland, CA, during the summer of 2023

Study Abroad Equity Scholarships

Studying abroad is a vital part of a student's academic and career development, adding a global perspective on global issues and an "outside-in" perspective on social structures in the U.S. that can otherwise remain invisible. Studying abroad has been shown to increase career prospects, and its value grows throughout a career. Nonetheless, participation in study abroad among students of color, first generation, and low income students remains stubbornly low. The Study Abroad Equity Scholarship provides financial assistance to students who may otherwise forgo on this opportunity. The funds partially underwrite their financial aid package and provide much-needed travel stipends to these students.

This year, recipients included Farah Tolu-Honary'24 (pictured at right) who spent the full year in North Africa, studying in Morocco and Tunisia, focusing on her interest in regional and international relations and pan africanism. [Natalia Ramirez-Vang'24](#) spent the fall at James Cook University in Australia, where she pursued her interest in the experience of Aboriginal people in that country.

Other recipients of the scholarship included:

- Saumyaa Gupta'24, who studied refugee policies in Jordan
- Moon Sum'24, who studied creative writing and immigration in England and Malta
- Elena Patilliet'24, who studied Arabic and international relations in Israel
- Montana McMahan'23, who studied law and justice in Northern Ireland
- Flora Milford'24, who studied German approaches to historical atrocities in Germany
- Antariksh Sharma'23, who studied economic stratification in England



Summer Grants

Summer Grants are awarded to select students based on a competitive application process coordinated by the Career Works office. The grants support student internships, research, and other opportunities to expand their understanding of issues, their skill sets, and career prospects. Selected projects must deepen students' understanding of human rights and social justice. This year, six students received grants for summer projects. They included Farah Tolu-Honary'24, who, following a year studying abroad in Morocco and Tunisia, carried out a research project on the political turmoil gripping Senegal this summer. The grant also supported her travel to Buenos Aires, Argentina, where she had been honored to present a paper of hers selected by the [International Political Science Association Conference](#). "I felt that this experience... was putting my Beloit education into practice," she wrote.

Other recipients of Summer Grants include:

- Sochea Chaay'25, who carried out an internship on economic equity at the Greening Institute in Oakland, CA
- Joya Saxena'25 (pictured at left), who interned at a human rights law firm in South Africa
- Saumyaa Gupta'24, who was selected for the MIT Summer Research Program in political science
- Ariana Tolu-Honary'24, who took intensive Arabic language in Madison, Wisconsin, to build upon her study abroad experience in the United Arab Emirates
- Lane Wilson'25, who volunteered in a refugee camp in Greece





Postgraduate Fellowships

Postgraduate Fellowships help graduates of Beloit College who have studied and engaged in human rights and social justice to make their first career moves beyond college. This provides a critical stepping stone to keep their momentum and to gain valuable internship and project experience to assist them in their career trajectory.

This year, four students received the fellowship. They included [Jada Daniel'23](#) (pictured at left), who proposed to use her Fellowship funding to continue research on “the realities of Black femmes in Chicago to curate a collection of love letters for the Black femme by the Black femme to empower the Black femme to define, embody, and authenticate femininity in ways that affirm them and them only,” she wrote. This is a project that she intends to continue in graduate school, using participatory research as “a tool to cultivate community, radical Black love, agency, and resistance.”

Other recipients of the Fellowship include:

- Syd Clark'23, who plans to work in environmental justice and community building in Chicago
- Phidor Kong'23, who is carrying out an internship with the National Council for Sustainable Development in Cambodia prior to attending graduate school for environmental policy
- Maddison Moser'23, who is volunteering with HealthNet Rock County to expand her understand of addressing health inequities prior to attending graduate school in nursing

Global Experience Seminars

To stimulate active engagement with global issues, the Weissberg Program provided scholarships to thirty-six students participating in faculty-led study abroad courses in the summer of 2023. Courses led by faculty allow students to immerse themselves in a targeted topic with their peers and with the guidance of a trusted academic leader.

This year's Global Experience Seminars studied the holocaust and public memory in Germany and Poland, the imperial history of the US in Puerto Rico, and took a critical lens on the historiography of Rome in Italy.

The course in Puerto Rico was led by Prof. Michael Dango. One student, Diego Boyd Lasalle'25, wrote in a [web story](#) about the course, that a key part of a Beloit College education "is gaining new perspectives and the ability to think critically about the larger problems in the U.S. and the world beyond its borders. This training is vital preparation for participating in the challenging civic responsibilities our generation will assume."



The course in Germany and Poland was led by Beloit College's newly appointed president Eric Boynton, drawing on his academic expertise in [trauma studies](#).

Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with these courses that cultivated their engagement with global issues of social justice. One student who participated in the seminar in Germany and Poland wrote in their evaluation, "The GES was one of the most beneficial and memorable experiences I've had. I learned WAY more than I imagined and made SO many fun memories. I cannot recommend these programs enough."

At left, students in Puerto Rico visit Old San Juan. Above, President Eric Boynton presents an introduction to students in Berlin visiting the Sachsenhausen Place of Remembrance