

Weissberg Program in Human Rights and Social Justice

**Annual Report
Academic Year 2019-2020**



**Beloit
College**



Celebrating 20 Years!

In October 2019, several members of the Beloit College faculty, staff and students were delighted to join the Weissberg Foundation in Washington, DC, to celebrate twenty years of the Weissberg Program in Human Rights and Social Justice. The featured speakers of the evening included Weissberg Chair 2018-19 Joel Simon, Beloit College political science professors Beth Dougherty and Rachel Ellett, and student leader Superior Murphy'21 (pictured above), and also included program founder and President of the Weissberg Foundation Marvin Weissberg, and Beloit College President Scott Bierman (pictured below with Foundation Vice President Nina Weissberg'84).

The occasion marked twenty years since the inception of the Weissberg Program in 1999 and was attended by Beloit College alumni, friends and partners of the Weissberg Foundation.

Over the course of the program's twenty years, its tremendous impact has included:

- 20 annual Weissberg Chairs
- 65 public events during Chair residencies
- 6,000 students connected to activities
- 7 global seminars for faculty and staff development
- 59 student scholarships
- 93 student grant projects
- 48 post-graduate fellowships



The Weissberg SHE-CAN Scholarship

SHE-CAN scholars continue to add their unique perspectives and experience to campus culture. Unlike many other international students, SHE-CAN students are high-potential future leaders from impoverished rural areas, who have experienced firsthand the consequences of a nation that's endured intense conflicts. Scholars recruited by the SHE-CAN organization enrich the student body with their academic rigor, aspirations of long term impact in their home countries and provide perspectives from post-conflict political and social environments.

Beloit College welcomed two first-year SHE-CAN students in the fall of 2019, which brought the total number in their cohort to six. The new SHE-CAN scholars are Ariane Irafasha'23 from Rwanda and Phidor Kong'23 from Cambodia. Juniors Chelsea Gaju'21 and Seekguech Sok'21 both studied abroad during this spring - Chelsea in the Netherlands and Seekguech in New Zealand, where their semesters were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sophomores Christiane Umutoni'22 and Chamnan Suon'22 continued to thrive and delivered leadership speeches at a SHE-CAN leadership summit, which can be seen here. [Christiane](#) and [Chamnan](#).



SHE-CAN Student Spotlight

Ariane Irafasha'23 is a sophomore from Rwanda. At Beloit, she is the treasurer of the Beloit International Student Career Services, a club aimed at helping international students make full use of the opportunities around them. She is a member of the Black Students United Club, the Pre-Health Professions Club, the Afro-Caribbean Society, Global Beloiters, the International Students Club, and the French Club.

More profiles are at shecan.global



**SUPPORTING
HER EDUCATION
CHANGES
A NATION**

Weissberg Study Abroad Equity Scholarship

Beloit College launched the Study Abroad Equity Scholarship in 2019-20, supporting **fourteen** students with **tuition** during a semester abroad. The scholarship also provided funds to support **travel expenses** that often pose a barrier to student participation, ensuring equitable access regardless of economic circumstances. The scholarship was awarded to students based on their interest in studying issues related to human rights and social justice and their financial need.

Seva Poitevin-Mills'21 (pictured at right) received the scholarship to study health in Ghana in the fall of 2020. While studying at the University of Ghana, she volunteered with the West Africa Aids Foundation, helping to survey communities on health care and social messaging. About her experience, she wrote, "I learned first hand how nonprofits actually work and how bureaucracy and corruption can get in the way of a well-intended organization... So much of public health is community health, and I was able to really begin to draw those connections." Read more about Seva's experience [here](#).



Quisi Rodriguez-Oregel'22 (pictured at left), an international relations major, studied at Goldsmiths College, University of London, with the support of the Weissberg Study Abroad Equity Scholarship.

She wrote, "I was able to learn more about myself because of these new experiences, things that I would not have known had I not studied abroad... I am very grateful for the Weissberg study abroad scholarship because it gives students like me who are low-income the opportunity to actually do something that I thought would not be financially feasible."

#GetWoke: Bringing home & contextualizing national issues, conversations and debates

The annual #GetWoke series, in its fourth year at Beloit College, kicked off with the Ousley Scholar in Residence, and continued with panels and events focused on bringing national conversations to campus.

Ousley Scholar in Residence: Elizabeth Yeampierre on Environmental Justice

September 12 - 13, 2019



The Ousley Scholar in Residence honors the legacy of Grace Ousley, the first black woman to graduate from Beloit College, and is offered to scholar/activist/organizers who are committed to the theory and practice of social justice. The first event to kick off the #GetWoke series in fall 2019 highlighted pressing issues surrounding the work of environmental justice and equitable global practices. Climate justice is a

term used for framing environmental justice as an ethical and political issue. The Residency was crucial to help students recognize that those least responsible for climate change often suffer the worst consequences.

The 2019-20 Ousley Scholar was Elizabeth Yeampierre, a nationally recognized Puerto Rican attorney and environmental justice leader of African and Indigenous ancestry born and raised in New York City. She brought extensive experience in American Indian law, US EPA policy, health sciences, and environmental justice inter-relationships to the College as a leading expert on the current issues surrounding how climate change impacts marginalized populations.

Her keynote highlighted the pressing issues surrounding the work of environmental justice, and how students can engage in this work to promote equitable global practices. She shared how from Brooklyn to the Bay area and from Detroit to the Gulf South, front-line communities living in the midst of environmental degradation for generations are engaged in creating local livable economies that reclaim historical traditions that honor the Earth and its people. Through her keynote and class visits, she discussed the challenges faced by communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and how they are taking action to achieve a just solution to secure their human right to a place to live.

#GetWoke (Cont.)

Event 2: Speaker - Anu Yadav, "Soul Tent Stories"

November 8, 2019

Anu Yadev returned to Beloit College's campus to share with students her current theatrical project, Soul Tent Stories, the research phase of a larger multi-year theater project on how we heal from racism and poverty.

Anu Yadav is a critically acclaimed actress, writer and theater-based educator dedicated to telling the stories of people pushed to the margins of public discourse. She co-founded the storytelling project *Classlines*, and wrote and performed her solo plays *'Capers* and *Meena's Dream* that debuted to sold-out houses and toured nationally. She was featured in the documentaries *Walk with Me* and *Chocolate City*.



The Weissberg Alumni Career Panel in Human Rights, October 4th, 2019

This annual panel has become a feature in the fall, bringing to campus alumni working in the fields of social justice and human rights. The panelists help students understand how to navigate a trajectory, both in college and beyond, that enables them to make a difference by applying their knowledge and passions to real world problems. The panelists visited classes, met with small groups of students, and participated in a 75-minute moderated discussion on campus.

Pictured, left to right, are moderator Jennifer Esperanza, professor of anthropology, Alex Armour'02, of Illinois Charitable Trust, [Dasheema Jarrett-Jones'09](#) of the Centers for Disease Control, and Daniel Weyl'10 of The Rotary Foundation. The fourth panelist, not pictured, was Olivia Randi'14, of CSG Justice Center.



Weissberg Fellowships Granted

Five graduating seniors received the award of the Weissberg Fellowship. These awards grant funding to graduates to help them bridge the gap between graduation and working in the fields of human rights and social justice. The award amounts ranged from \$1,100 to \$6,000, depending on the projects proposed by recipients. Supporting students to make the leap beyond graduation into meaningful careers that have an impact on the world is a distinctive and important aspect of the Weissberg Program. This support has become even more important during years of economic turndown, when opportunities for paid employment are few.

The 2020 Weissberg Fellows are:

- Parker Blunt'20, anthropology. Project: teaching with City Year in Kansas City, MO.
- Joanna Furlan'19, history & Spanish. Project: volunteering with immigrant support organizations in Quito, Ecuador (deferred).
- Gabriel Gonzalez'20, sociology & dance. Project: virtual community building among queer people of color.
- Brett Phillips'20, Spanish & critical identity studies. Project: homeless prevention outreach in Colorado with Americorps.
- Kaveri Sarkar'20, international relations & psychology. Project: internship with Atlantic Councils South Asia Center.

Weissberg Fellow Spotlight

Kaveri Sarkar'20, an international relations & psychology double major, summa cum laude, from New Delhi, India, is one of five recipients of this year's Weissberg Fellowship. In the summer and fall of 2020, Kaveri is carrying out a virtual internship with the Atlantic Council's South Asia Center. "My internship is incredibly substantive and I am enjoying every minute of it. I cannot be more thankful for the support of the Weissberg Fellowship," she wrote.



Spring Break Immersion Trips

These short, immersive experiences allow students to delve deeper into a topic they are passionate about, increasing their understanding of how that topic plays out in real life. Not only are these trips high-impact educational experiences, they also help students network with organizations that enhance their career development and prospects.

Immigration Awareness was a trip to Denver, CO, led by Yolanda Odufuwa'22 (pictured second from left). Six students visited a number of organizations in Denver working on immigrant rights, refugee support, and legal advocacy. Student participants visited with alumna Rattana Rode'10 (pictured on the right), at the Asian Pacific Development Center in Aurora, CO, among several other organizations.



Trip participant Karen Soto'23 wrote, "The most impactful part of the trip for me was definitely when we went to the court hearings. It really hit home witnessing it. When I was younger, my parents had to go through the process, but since I was so young I never really knew what was going on... It made me even more passionate about helping undocumented students and helping them find the resources they need in order to reach their goals. That doesn't come easily because of their status."

Mounds Along the Mississippi was a trip to visit Native American mound systems in Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa, led by Ilyssa Kosova'20 and Elaina "Nana" Heaton'22. The students used Beloit College's effigy mounds as a point of departure for exploring site preservation, cultural histories, and Native community engagement with mound sites in the Midwest.

One student participant wrote, "I learned that the history when studied through textbooks or through museums offers only one perspective of how the history might have been rather than multiple perspectives... I learned that there are many opportunities for an individual pursuing anthropology."



Summer Project Grants

Summer grant funding allows individual students to finance a range of summer activities, from internships to independent research, in the fields of social justice and human rights. Students apply to multiple funding streams using one common application, and many grant recipients have received funding from more than one source, thus leveraging the funds from the Weissberg Program to support more students.

The Weissberg Partnership received eight applications for summer project grants, among the 39 students who applied for summer funding opportunities. Of these nine, Weissberg funds were granted to two, covering their full expenses. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 shut down, these two students were not able to carry out their plans. One of them was able to fulfill part of her activities online, while the other postponed her plans entirely.

Sy Dragon'22, international relations (pictured at right). Project: virtual intensive Arabic course, American University in Cairo. "As I hope to work with refugees from the Middle East, Arabic is a crucial skill to have... My summer experience greatly enhanced my language abilities and has better equipped me to continue studying Arabic or do work in the Human Rights field, especially with refugees."

Yolanda Odufuwa'22, political science and critical identity studies. Project: internship with Eyewitness Palestine, Washington DC and Palestinian Territories (postponed).



Job Shadowing Trip Re-imagined

In 2019, under the college's new strategic plan, the Liberal Arts in Practice Center, which administers the annual Spring Break Job Shadowing, moved offices, was re-envisioned and renamed the Career and Community Engagement Center. The Job Shadowing program has been reimagined to capitalize on the Career Channels program, and the new concept will be launched in academic year 2020-21. As a result, there was no trip scheduled for spring break 2020.

COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund

In May 2020, Beloit College proposed a variance to the Weissberg Foundation gift to reallocate unspent funds to support students financially impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. \$10,000 went to students in the Student Excellence and Leadership program to unlock an additional \$20,000 of Federal funds. Another \$12,975 has supported underrepresented students who have documented financial barriers to persisting in college.

Partnership and Administration

The Weissberg Partnership Team is administered by two co-directors based in the Office of the Associate Dean for Student Success, Community and Equity, and in the Center for Immersive and Experiential Learning Opportunities. The co-directors work in partnership with two faculty directors, the Provost of the College, and the Weissberg Foundation to develop and select programming themes on the cutting edge of social justice, racial equity and human rights. The faculty fellows will rotate on a three-year, staggered cycle and will be appointed by the Provost based on their expertise in areas of social justice, racial equity and human rights. Each year, this team selects and supervises the larger group in charge of the annual program development, called the Incubation and Implementation Team (IIT). The first IIT was convened in spring 2020 to coordinate the residency of Joan Carling, which has been postponed until spring of 2021. The IIT for 2021-2022 has been working over the summer to give shape to the theme of Citizenship and the Rights of the Undocumented and Stateless.

Faculty, staff, and student participants received a small stipend for their participation in the IIT, which is funded by the Weissberg Program. The IIT groups also had access to funding to advance their own expertise in the thematic areas through conferences and outside consultants, as well as to support faculty in developing courses on the theme. Additionally, funds partially supported the salary of the Program Coordinator in the Office of Student Success, Equity and Community, and of the Associate Director of International Education.

Below: the promotional banner for Weissberg Week 2020, developed by the Incubation and Implementation Team. The program included a film series, workshops on activism, 15 class visits, a conference on indigenous rights, a student performance, and a keynote address.



**Our thanks and gratitude to the
Weissberg Foundation for making
this program possible.**

www.beloit.edu/weissberg

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