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## OVCS Newsletter November 2014

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The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

# COMMUNITY LEARNING

## CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

### OVCS NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2014



## Tunnel of Oppression

*Frida Rodriguez, North Campus Area Coordinator, R.E.A.L.*

The Tunnel of Oppression project was brought to Connecticut College in the Spring of 2014 by the Office of Residential Education and Living, Unity House, and the Office of Volunteers for Community Service. They have been working hard to intergrate the Tunnel of Oppression into the Connecticut College experience and this Fall they once again created the Tunnel of Oppression. It was a great success with 180 individuals actively participating.

### What Is The Tunnel?

The Tunnel of Oppression is an interactive diversity program that educates students, faculty, and staff on issues of hate, discrimination, and oppression.

### Its Purpose:

A series of performances, art, and exhibitions brought together by different entities on campus, the Tunnel of Oppression strives to provide participants a new framework to better understand social justice inequalities observed on

our campus, in our society, and globally.

For those who may have never been in these types of situations, the Tunnel may provide them with unique and challenging experiences. When these challenges successfully engage the emotions of the participants, they are able to gain a sense of what it might feel like to be oppressed, discriminated against, stigmatized, or misunderstood.

### Our Campus:

At Connecticut College, the Tunnel of Oppression provides the campus community with an opportunity to engage more deeply in the dialogue of oppression. Throughout the Tunnel, participants contribute to the larger conversation in a unique way as they deconstruct, and reconstruct, their own understanding of social justice inequalities and their own effect in those who face them on their daily lives.

Tunnel of Oppression begins with

“Camel Voices”, a pre-event where members of the Connecticut College community express what oppression, privilege, and discrimination means to them and how they experience it on campus through a variety of activities. Some of the products of this event are then displayed at the welcoming room during Tunnel of Oppression.

This year, Tunnel of Oppression displayed a variety of topics, including racial discrimination, gender discrimination, bullying, power of authority, homelessness, physical accessibility, issues surrounding men of color, sexual assault, domestic violence, and discrimination against the LGBTQ community, among many others. At the end of the Tunnel of Oppression, participants close with a follow up conversation to debrief their experience through the Tunnel.

The whole experience concludes with a walk through the Gallery of Action which is a space for participants to

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become more aware of the different resources on campus, and efforts campus entities are making to act against, and become even more aware of, the different issues affecting our communities.

Over 14 hours, 180 participants went through the Tunnel of Oppression. Students, faculty, staff members, and even our own President Bergeron, took some time out of their busy day to participate in this half an hour experience. Many conversations started at Tunnel

of Oppression and it is our hope that Tunnel continues to serve as a space for dialogue.

The Tunnel of Oppression committee wants to thank all of the participants as well as all individuals who in one way or another helped make Tunnel of Oppression a successful event this year. Although the Office of Residential Education and Living, Unity House, and the Office of Volunteers for Community Service coordinated and organized the

event, it is an enormous project that cannot be successful without the help of volunteers who are passionate about bringing this experience to campus.

If you are interested in working on next year's Tunnel of Oppression, please feel free to reach out to Frida Rodriguez (Frida.rodriguez@conncoll.edu), or Jennifer Nival (Jennifer.nival@conncoll.edu) for further information. We will be happy to have you on the team!

## KBA

*Phillip Winchester '16*

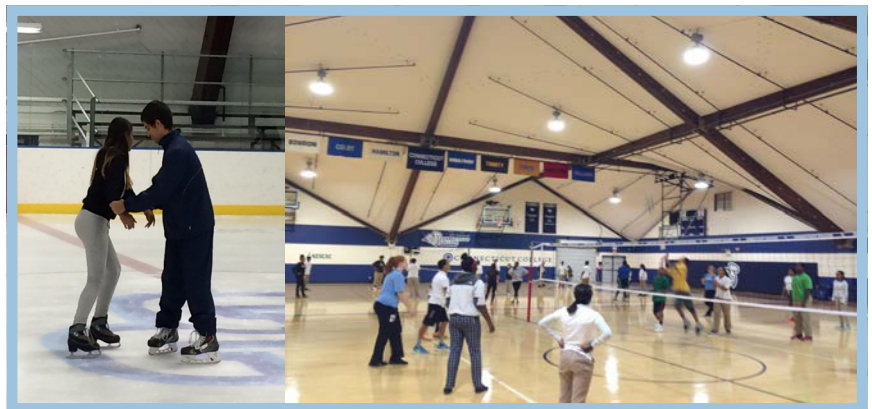
Joining KBA this fall has been one of the most positive experiences I've had this semester. I have spent the past 5 summers as a camp counselor, and I've been trying to find a way to bring that experience with me to Conn. KBA has been a great way for me to get away from the stresses of being a student and focus on interacting with kids. It's really easy to get caught up in what homework I have to do for the coming week and forget that there is a world outside of Conn. Being able to spend 4 hours a week with 7th and 8th graders who are so energetic helps to reset me. The kids love almost everything we do with them, especially ice skating or swimming in the pool, and spending time with the kids as they try new things or genuinely enjoy an activity is refreshing.

I am a computer science major and also the captain of the club frisbee team at Conn. These two groups take up most of my time during the day, however to be able to share my experiences with kids is great. I've led a session on frisbee for KBA and the kids seemed to really enjoy it, a

few of them still refer to me as the "frisbee expert."

Many kids were new to the idea of frisbee and needed a lot of reinforcement to understand the fundamentals. While the participants may not know how to play every sport we try with them, they all are willing to try them out. When we went ice skating with KBA, the kids all started off slow and careful, but with the Hockey Team's help the kids were proficiently skating around the rink by the end. When we went swimming in the pool, most of the kids were not comfortable in the water, but by swimming next to them or jumping off the diving board with them, their confidence increases and they learn new skills.

I joined KBA this semester because I needed to fulfill a requirement for a class, Introduction to Human Development. But being able to spend some of my time each week with 7th and 8th graders has been great and the class material comes alive when I am interacting with the kids. We have built relationships and we enjoy messing around. They are excited to be at the college and we have learned to listen and show respect to each other. I do feel like I am getting to know the kids and want to continue building our relationships over the course of next semester through KBA.





## My Upcoming Immigration Research Trip to Spain

*Leela Riesz '16*

So many of the upperclass students that I met my first year at Connecticut College had just returned from abroad, and during that year, they had this glow. They were full of energy and returned with a newly attained global perspective on issues that mattered to them. As this fall 2014 semester draws to a close, I am feeling a great sense of anticipation. This spring, I will be studying abroad with the Center for Cross Cultural Studies in Sevilla, Spain. I look forward to eating tapas, learning flamenco, living with a host family, touring the city, developing my Spanish, and developing my Mellon Mays research project. Last spring I became part of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program. This program is designed for students from minority backgrounds who are interested in pursuing PhDs. The program prepares us for graduate school. As a first year, I never would have thought that I would be pursuing a PhD in anthropology, but my academic experiences and interactions with professors at Connecticut College have confirmed that I want to continue this kind of work. As a Mellon Mays and CISLA scholar and anthropology major, I am developing a research project that examines the North African immigrant experience in Spain and processes of identity formation through the lens of food. Of course, this is what the title of my project is today, but as I have come to learn, students' research projects are continually evolving. This topic draws inspiration from courses that I have taken as well as numerous conversations with professors and friends. I took a course with my advisor, Professor Jeffrey Cole, last spring that ultimately shaped this project. In his "Food and Migration" course, we examined the different foodways immigrants brought with them to the United States, how they preserved

these food practices or adapted them in the new country, and how these food cultures were perceived by people outside immigrant communities. This course also involved a trip to New York City where we were able to engage in some ethnographic work and meet with various food organizations. For my research, I will be looking at North African restaurants in Spain. In speaking with restaurant owners, I hope to gain insight into their experience opening a new business in Spain and to investigate the relationship between food and identity. Through this research, I have been able to combine my interest in Anthropology, immigration, and identity, as well as and race and ethnicity.

After studying abroad in Sevilla, this summer I will conduct an internship and continue my research in Spain at an NGO or immigrant cultural center. This internship will challenge me to use my Spanish-speaking skills in a real-world context and it will expose me to the structural oppression faced by immigrant communities in Spain. For this reason, junior year brings a lot of excitement. Many of my friends, like me, will be having adventures and gaining new perspectives while abroad. I know that my semester and internship abroad will enrich my current research and I hope that they will open up opportunities for the future.





## New England Council of Latin American Studies

*Gina Pol '16*

I was tremendously honored to have presented at the New England Council of Latin American Studies (NECLAS) conference with Professor Campos-Holland and Brooke Dinsmore '14' on a portion of our research that focuses on Latin@ youth's social media use. Youth in general are often overlooked in sociology literature, where they are seen as individuals who lack agency and are incapable of understanding the things that adults can. Our research aims to disprove this by bringing in youth voices, perspectives, and experiences as individuals who do have agency and are just as aware of their surroundings as adults are. More specifically, our presentation focused on youth's roles as producers, consumers, and critics of content on social media and their search for adult-free spaces on social networking sites. By far, my favorite part of our presentation was when we shared the various quotes of our participants. Since the purpose and goal of our research has always been to share youth's voices and produce knowledge, it is always an amazing feeling when we do share these quotes to our audience.

It has been more than a year since I have been working on the Playground Negotiations project and it has honestly contributed to my learning in both a classroom and non-classroom setting. As a research team with four students and one professor, we continuously recognize our faculty-student research as a contributor to the college's goal of "liberal arts in action." We may not focus

in the New London community specifically, but we have remained connected with the community we conducted our research with and we consistently support them in any requests, including offering campus tours and educational workshops for the youth that have been involved. We place a major emphasis on contributing to the community because we are aware of the contributions of each and everyone of our participants.

A large part of my time at Conn has been dedicated to this research project, especially this year where I work 14 hours a week with Professor Campos-Holland. This research project has given me the opportunity to present at two major conferences, in one of Conn's lecture series, and a poster presentation. I am currently striving towards co-authorship for the Age and Stratification paper and to present in the American Sociological Association Conference in Chicago, Illinois for the summer of 2015.

## DINNER OF THANKS

Wednesday- November 26  
Hood Dining Room- 4:00pm

Dean of the College  
Office of Religious and Spiritual Life  
OVCS

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