

Director's Report, 2013-2014



University of Tennessee - Department of Anthropology - Disasters, Displacement and Human Rights Program (DDHR)

A Look Back -- With Appreciation!

As the first full year of the Disasters, Displacement and Human Rights Program (DDHR) draws to a close, a brief report that summarizes some of our past successes and orients us towards the future seems in order. It is fitting to open such a report with a statement of gratitude to the students, colleagues and friends who have not only helped nurture an idea but have worked so hard to realize it.

- **Dr. Gregory Button** was instrumental in conceiving and establishing the DDHR program. As co-director, he lent both his high



profile in disaster studies and his expertise to shape the program's foundations. He will be missed as he departs UT, but leaves behind a legacy of which we can all be proud. We wish him

the greatest success in his future endeavors.

- **Julia Hanebrink**, doctoral candidate, tirelessly led our other dedicated graduate students in the organization of the inaugural DDHR symposium. Held at the UT College of Law in February 2013, the symposium drew more than 100 participants, about half of whom came from institutions around the US and Europe. Julia also collaborated with **Dr. Tricia R. Hepner** to co-organize a well-

attended and enthusiastically received DDHR panel at the 2013 American Anthropological Association meeting.

- **Dr. Richard A. Wilson**, Gladstein Chair and Professor of Anthropology and Law at the University of Connecticut, showed his support and enthusiasm by serving as keynote speaker for the 2013 symposium. He has also provided ongoing guidance rooted in experience building the highly successful interdisciplinary Human Rights Institute at UConn, which he directed for ten years. **Mr. Stefan Schmitt**, Director of the International Forensic Program for Physicians for Human Rights, was also a keynote speaker and shared his experiences working internationally on matters of disasters, displacement and human rights.
- Several DDHR Core and Affiliated Faculty – **Dr. Amy Mundorff**, **Dr. Dawnie Steadman**, **Dr. Bertin Louis, Jr.**, **Dr. Gregory Button**,

- **Dr. Barbara Heath, Dr. De Ann Pendry, Dr. Rosalind Hackett, Dr. Rebecca Klenk, Prof. Robert Blitt, and Prof. Karla McKanders** participated in the inaugural symposium's success in various ways, from hosting planning meetings or securing resources and speakers, to chairing panels and delivering papers. Students in the **Undergraduate Anthropology Association** helped with legwork throughout the symposium.
- Graduate students and DDHR whiz kids **Jaymelee J. Kim** and **Amanda J. Reinke** published an [article in *Anthropology News*](#) promoting the program to the American Anthropological Association. Together with their colleagues **Tyler Howe, Erin Eldridge,** and **Eliza Guyol-Meinrath**, they also organized a DDHR panel at the Southern Anthropological Society meeting held in Cherokee, NC, in March 2014.
- **Dr. Andrew Kramer**, Head of the Department of Anthropology, has encouraged

and supported DDHR every step of the way. We look forward to his continued support as he moves into his new position as Associate Dean of Academic Personnel.

- **Dean Teresa Lee** of the College of Arts and Sciences has also supported and promoted the DDHR program in its first year, from giving welcoming remarks at the inaugural symposium to inviting **Dr. Tricia R. Hepner** to give a Pregame Showcase lecture and a presentation, along with **Eliza Guyol-Meinrath**, to the Dean's Advisory Council in fall 2013.
- **Many other colleagues and students** throughout the university have expressed their keen interest in DDHR. A host of departments and Colleges donated resources and facilities to help make our first year a success. We enjoyed some public relations exposure through articles in the Daily Beacon and other campus publications. We thank everyone for their support!

An Official Beginning

Fall 2013 marked the official launch of the DDHR program through the addition of a Graduate Certificate and an undergraduate major concentration in Anthropology.

The Certificate program is open to all graduate students at UT regardless of College, Department, or degree-seeking status. The undergraduate concentration provides intensity and focus for undergraduate Anthropology majors.

We are delighted with the student response: at the close of spring 2014 semester, eleven undergraduate majors and seven graduate students have declared their participation in DDHR. Many others have yet to submit their formal applications. This year we will also see the first DDHR graduates in Anthropology: **Sarah Hall** (Outstanding Graduating Senior), **Madison Hammett, Christina Harrison, Joshua Lynn, and Sean Smith.** **Barbara Forman** will be the first graduate student to officially receive the DDHR certificate!



That DDHR is official today should not obscure the program's deeper roots. The program is the result of more than five years of graduate student demand, talent, and energy combined with faculty commitment and lots of hard work. Several graduate alumni were instrumental in conceptualizing DDHR, among them **Lily Harmon-Gross** (MA 2009) and **Cara Tyers** (PhD 2009). Others, including **Erin Eldridge**, **Tony Van Winkle**, **Shelly Yankovskyy**, and **Jaymelee Kim** completed their training in DDHR and were instrumental in shaping the program but predated its official start. And **Eliza Guyol-Meinrath** (MA 2010) completed a Master's while DDHR was still just a good idea but returned to us in 2013 to pursue her doctorate under the official program.

We have also seen a marked interest in DDHR among prospective students. Out of two hundred applications for our graduate program this year, thirty-nine of them - or 20 per cent - explicitly noted DDHR as a reason for applying. All of these figures bode well for our strength moving forward!

Current Successes

DDHR research is more than just a good idea. It's a fundable one!

Faculty and graduate students alike have demonstrated considerable success in achieving research funding for DDHR-related projects.



Jaymelee Kim (left) won dissertation fieldwork grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the National Science Foundation for her project, "Transitional Justice in a Non-Transitioning Society: Perceived Efficacy of Canada's Justice and

Reconciliation Effort." **Krista Billingsley**, **Gabriela Maldonado**, and **Adrienne Kembel** all received funding in 2012-2013 from the UT McClure Scholarship program to conduct research in Nepal, Guatemala, and Uganda, respectively. **Julia Hanebrink** has continued to manage a multi-million dollar grant from the National Institutes of Health as Program Coordinator of the Minority Health and

Health Disparities International Research Training (MHIRT) Program at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, TN. The MHIRT program has not only allowed Julia to collect data for her dissertation project, "Which Doctors are Witchdoctors? An Analysis of Medical Syncretism in Uganda," but also funded ten weeks of research for **Amanda Reinke**, examining the intersections of land disputes and gender violence in northern Uganda.

In more recent exciting developments, **Dr. Amy Mundorff** and **Katie Corcoran** have landed a half-million dollar grant for their research on mass grave detection using remote sensing techniques. And **Tyler Howe**, doctoral student and Tribal Historic Preservationist for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, received a \$25,000 grant in partnership with Wild South that will aid in the further collection and analysis of archival materials used in his dissertation.

Meanwhile, **Dr. Dawnie Steadman** and **Tiffany Saul** have continued their research excavating and identifying individuals killed during the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War, while cultural doctoral student and professional forensic anthropologist **Hugh Tuller** embarks on a mission to Germany with the Joint POW-MIA Action Command (JPAC).

Dr. Tricia R. Hepner and Dr. Rosalind Hackett and eleven UT students are preparing for a fourth



season of the Gulu Study and Service Abroad Program (GSSAP) in Uganda. Finally, **Drs. Hepner and**

Steadman will be working with **Julia Hanebrink (above)** in June-July on a pilot project blending the methods of cultural and forensic anthropology to address the problem of the missing in Uganda's civil war.

Amidst all of this, faculty and students publish apace. A few recent successes include **Amanda Reinke's** co-authored chapter with Dr. Marisa Ensor, "African Children's Right to Participate in their Own Protection: Perspectives from South Sudan" which appeared in the *International Journal of Children's Rights* (22: 1) and **Julia Hanebrink's** co-authored multimedia essay "The Art of Peace in Northern Uganda" was published in the *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* (3: 2). **Dr. Bertin Louis, Jr.'s** book, *My Soul is in Haiti: Migration and Protestantism in the Haitian Diaspora in the Bahamas*, will soon be out with New York University Press. **Dr. Tricia R. Hepner** published her co-edited book *Conflict and Peacebuilding in the African Great Lakes Region* with Indiana University Press in 2013 and looks forward to the appearance of *African Asylum at a Crossroads: Activism, Expert Testimony, and Refugee Rights* with Ohio University Press in 2014-15.

Finally, we congratulate our recent and upcoming doctoral graduates! **Dr. Shelly Yankovskky** and **Dr. Erin Eldridge** graduated in spring 2013; **Dr. Tony Van Winkle** is graduating in spring 2014, and **Jaymelee Kim** and **Julia Hanebrink** will graduate in summer 2014!

Looking Ahead

The Department of Anthropology and the DDHR program are undergoing some exciting changes as we move ahead. First and foremost, **Dr. Vivian Y.**

Choi (right) will join the DDHR faculty in cultural anthropology in fall 2014.

Dr. Choi earned her doctorate from the University of California, Davis in 2012 and for the past two years has been a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at Cornell University.

Dr. Choi is a specialist in disasters, critical humanitarianism, and science and technology studies and has done fieldwork in post-tsunami Sri Lanka. She will teach DDHR courses and infuse yet more energy and creativity into the department and program as a whole. We heartily welcome Dr. Choi to UT Anthropology and DDHR especially!

Also on the faculty front, we are enormously pleased to have our own **Dr. Tony Van Winkle** joining us as a full-time Lecturer in Anthropology next year. He will also contribute to the vitality of DDHR through important course offerings and support for our students.



Department of Anthropology
250 South Stadium Hall
Knoxville, TN 37996
Ph: 865-974-4408
E-mail: thepner@utk.edu

DDHR Conference 2015

The Second DDHR Conference planning is underway, once again led by our fearless graduate students.

Jaymelee Kim and **Amanda Reinke** have been working with **Dr. Giovanna Vidoli** on a funding proposal that will enable us to bring colleagues from across the globe to UT. As Dr. Vidoli welcomes her baby girl into the world, Amanda heads into the field this summer, and Jaymelee prepares to begin a new tenure-track job this fall at the University of Findlay, the reins will pass to **Eliza Guyol-Meinrath** and **Tyler Howe**.

Planned for September 2015 and organized around the theme of “Bridging the Collaborative Gap,” the

second DDHR conference will feature keynote talks by **Dr. Eric Stover**, Director of the Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley, and **Mr. Stephen Oola**, Head of Research and Advocacy and Programme Manager of Conflict, Transitional Justice and Governance at the Refugee Law Project of Makerere University in Uganda.

More information will be available soon so keep your eye on the [DDHR website](#), [Facebook page](#), and [Twitter!](#)



Final Thoughts from the Director



Our first year has been full of successes but also challenges. The process of building a program is inevitably a difficult one. It requires vision, sacrifice, and collaboration. It endures by seeing opportunities rather than obstacles. It thrives not on the strengths of individual accomplishments but on the willingness of like-minded people to devote their time and talent to something larger than themselves. It is defined in terms of service to one another and sincere commitment to principles and ideas. In an age where resources in higher education are increasingly scarce, successful program development may not be measured so much by finances as by human talent and tenacity. As anthropologists of disasters, displacement and human rights, we all know something about resilience, courage, and compassion. These are qualities we will continue to draw on as we work together to make DDHR and UT Anthropology a top performing program.

Onward and upward!