



Civic Happenings

Newsletter from the UMass Civic Initiative

January, 2016

An Introduction

I would like to introduce you to the new Monthly Newsletter for the Civic Initiative! This is a fun way to stay in touch with many years of alumni and friends. Our goal is to not only keep you posted with what we are doing, but what our Alumni and former staff are up to. Please follow the Civic Initiative on [Facebook](#) and share the exciting things you've done after your program. We may even showcase you in a future edition of the newsletter!



4th of July Parade 2012

Letter from the Director

I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year from all of us at the Civic Initiative. Along with our partners the US Department of State; the Argentine Fulbright Commission; and Meridian International Center, last year we hosted five separate programs and welcomed 112 international participants from 31

different countries.

We hired 16 Civic Fellows and worked with 4 separate academic directors. With their help we organized over 500 separate classes and events in both Amherst and 14 other cities and towns. We also hosted our first Fall program. The Young Southeast Asian Leaders program (YSEALI) started in September and ended in mid-October.

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Mike Hannahan at YSEALI Summit in Malaysia

Civic Participant Showcase

Kanza Javed

Program Title and Year: SUSI for Pakistani Young Leaders 2011



What have you been up to since the program?

I graduated with a Masters of Philosophy degree in English Literature from Kinnaird College for Women (Lahore). I spent a research semester at Arizona State University, another state department funded opportunity and 'Pakistani Immigrant Writings in the US' was my primary field of research. I finished my first research paper with the help of two highly distinguished scholars at Arizona State and presented it at *Society for the Study of American Women Writers Conference* (Philadelphia). And I finally, finally, revised and published my first novel (the one that I had been working on for the past seven years) and released it in Pakistan, India and the US.

What was the most influential experience you had while in the

US with the Civic Initiative?

The study tour, for certain, was very influential for my personal growth. Every state is different in terms of culture, and customs, and it is crucial to immerse yourself in that cultural experience.

If given the opportunity to spend one day back in Amherst, what would you choose to do?

They have a highly competitive Creative Writing program; I would love to try my luck there.

What is one piece of advice you would give to a person chosen to participate in this

program?

Don't stick to the herd. Be independent. Explore. Talk to strangers. Try Mexican food. Get lost in New York. Go on a ghost tour. Discuss life with a South Asian immigrant. Watch a play. And there is more to life than shopping. A shrug from **Zara** won't take you far in life.

What is next on your To Do List?

Get another degree.

Write another book.

Learn to love winter again.

Kanza's book *Ashes, Wine and Dust* can be found at the following links:

Amazon

READINGS (In Pakistan)

Where Are They Now?

Tim Shea

Program and Years worked: SUSI for Pakistani Young Leaders Fellow 2010-2013

What have you been up to since Civic?

Immediately following the 2013 Civic summer, I threw everything I had in my car and moved down to Washington, DC, looking for work in international education. This turned out to be more

difficult than I had anticipated. After a few months of nearly fruitless job searching and then a few months more awaiting the results of a federal background check, I accepted a position as Junior Program Officer at the Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). In this capacity I am responsible for planning, overseeing, and recommending policy for the Fulbright Program and other exchange programs funded by ECA, primarily those in Tunisia and Algeria. As it happens, I work just down the hall from the folks who do this for the Civic Initiative's Pakistani Young Leaders program, so every now and then I see Mike wandering the halls. Needless to say I have not forgotten my time at Civic.



Tim Shea with 2012 SUSI Participant Abdur Rehman

What is your favorite Civic Memory?

There are too many memories to choose a favorite, but Civic's 2013 trip to Pakistan comes to mind. So much happened in that one week. I traveled around Islamabad with Mike and other Civic staff to talk about our programs, but more than anything we were there to be American in front of a Pakistani audience (I am sure we had a more official way of describing this), as we were the first U.S. university delegation in Pakistan for some number of years. The warm welcomes we received,

the camaraderie in reuniting with Civic alumni, meeting with hundreds of inspiring young Pakistanis; these are all memories that will continue to resonate with me.

What do you miss most about working with the Civic Initiative?

The people, top to bottom. From the outside looking in, it is amazing to see how much Civic does with the number of people they have at any one time, but it works because they have quality leadership with an eye for talent, a mission that matters, and relationships based on trust. Whether it was in the office, on the road, or relaxing after a long day, there was no shortage of good company. Also the dining commons-it is between those two.

What advice would you give a first time Civic Fellow on their first day?

Go all in. Get to know the students and scholars, where they come from, how they approach their lives. Find a way to be part of what works and learn from your mistakes (there will be plenty). There is no guarantee that every job you take will be worthwhile, but this is one of them so do not waste the opportunity.

What is next on your To Do List?

At this point I have convinced myself to go back to Civic. To the dining commons!

Do You Remember?

Making Connections: Argentina and Pakistan



Argentine and Pakistani Teachers Mixer 2014



Group Photo from Mixer Event

Letter from the Director

Continued

All of these programs will return in 2016 and, in addition, we will host 20 Pakistani teachers for a teacher education program similar to the one we ran in 2014. We have two grant applications

outstanding; one for Pakistan and one for a mixture of European students. We said goodbye to our good friend and longtime Civic employee Andy Carbaugh who has left to pursue graduate school. In response to his leaving we have reorganized the unit. Becky Howland will continue with many of our critical budgeting and financial tasks but will also become even more deeply involved in program management and implementation. We welcome Theresa Wodecki as our new finance and administrative assistant. Theresa was with us part time last summer and is now a full time employee. Robert Frost once said ""In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: It goes on."

We continued organizing alumni events. We managed a conference in Bulgaria for our APD program and met with our Pakistani alumni in Islamabad and our YSEALI alumni in Kuala Lumpur. I was also honored to speak at St. Lawrence University to the students of APD 2005 alumni Harinda Vindage. We hope 2016 offers many such opportunities as well.

We have set a number of goals for 2016 that I believe will make us a more flexible and responsive organization. First, we intend to expand our regular communication with both our alumni and our community network. In the next few months our blog and our twitter will become much more active as I begin to write about and post articles pertaining to the upcoming election. We also intend to use update our network on Civic activities as well as alumni updates. Follow us @Civicinitiative!

Second, we are going to develop a comprehensive survey system for all of our programs. With over 1000 alumni we have an excellent database with which to study the effects of exchange programs as well as in-country and between country networking.

Third, we want to develop a solid home stay system. We already have an excellent home visit network but the ability to overnight stays will, we believe, enhance some of our programs.

Finally, we are launching a new "Civic Ambassador" program for students. Our "Civic Mentor" program has provided us with excellent summer workers and has been, we think, one of the best programs on the UMass campus. The "Ambassador" program will be for students who don't want to commit to working full time but will be able to attend classes with our program participants part time and help them to explore the local community. We have already begun recruiting for the program.

I have always been fascinated by the simple question "What do you do?" This is a common question in the US; maybe all over the world. The answer is usually a bit casual, even facile. Someone might say "I'm a professor" or "A teacher". What one actually does goes deeper than this. I think at the Civic Initiative we do more than "run programs for international visitors". I believe what we do is to show - and to learn - that humans all over the world are not just one stereotyped thing - that we have complex and deep identities and that there is always, within those identities, something we can share. For example, when I speak to the Professors, I look out at a group of 18 different people. It would be easy to fit people into little boxes of color; continent; religion; gender - all of the things we fight about - but I chose to emphasize that we teach politics and that, at its best, politics teaches us to recognize our multiple selves and, from that, find a common ground.

My thinking on this has been influenced by Amartya Sen so forgive a long quote from a review of his work:

"My first exposure to murder," the Nobel-winning economist Amartya Sen writes in "Identity and Violence," "occurred when I was 11." It was 1944, a few years before the end of the British Raj and a period of widespread Hindu-Muslim riots. The victim was "a profusely bleeding unknown person suddenly stumbling through the gate to our garden, asking for help and a little water." Rushed to the hospital by Sen's father, the man died there of his injuries. He was Kader Mia, a Muslim day laborer knifed by Hindus. He had been asked by his wife not to go into a hostile area of then-undivided Bengal. But he had to feed his starving family, and he paid with his life.

To the young Sen, this event was not just traumatic but mystifying. How was it, Sen asks ..., that "... human beings ... were suddenly transformed into the ruthless Hindus and fierce Muslims..."? And how was it that Kader Mia would be seen as having only one identity - that of being Muslim - by Hindus who were, like him, out in the unprotected open because they too were starving? "For a bewildered child," Sen remembers, "the violence of identity was extraordinarily hard to grasp." And, he confesses, "it is not particularly easy even for a still bewildered elderly adult."

In our own little way, the Civic Initiative fights against this being forced to choose. Unfortunately, our current politics around the world is increasingly one where people are being manipulated; even forced, to choose. The entire strategy of ISIS is based on this.

Western politicians like Donald Trump are obliging by defining people not by their complex identities but by one thing - religion. The governments of Saudi Arabia and Iran thrive by being the champion of one thing - and people everywhere fall prey to demagogues who push tribalism and fear. The Earl of Kent, from King Lear, knew just who these demagogues and sycophants were:

Earl of Kent. That such a slave as this should wear a sword,
Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain
Which are too intrinse t' unloose; smooth every passion
That in the natures of their lords rebel,
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;

It is just the "holy cords" which are "too intrinse t' unloose;" which represent the complex human identities that are available for us to build friendships; compromises; and relationships - and just the bonds the rats are chewing.

While we were in Malaysia ISIS beheaded its sole Malaysian captive, presumably as a gruesome warning to Malaysia as the host of the ASEAN conference. Meanwhile, in the US Donald Trump continued his cynical campaign to win the Republican nomination on waves of fear and hatred. Trump and ISIS have in common a deep seated desire to make us one thing. They allow no human complexity or depth but, instead, see us as cardboard two-dimensional cartoons with nothing but a single designation.

We are better than that. As long as we talk and compare and learn we can refuse to be pushed into

a single camp. I think we need to remind ourselves of the importance of our roles as Civic workers and participants - as representatives of our countries but also of our complex identities.

I wish you all the very best New Year and hope to see as many of you as possible.

Sincerely,



Becky Howland
Program Manager
rhowland@donahue.umassp.edu

Mike Hannahan
Director
mhannahan@donahue.umassp.edu

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