



# IFP ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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VOLUME IV

## From the IFP SECRETARIAT. . .

As the number of fellows who have completed their studies continues to grow, the Secretariat is working to facilitate communication and to strengthen alumni networks through a re-design of IFP Online. Based on alumni and fellows' responses to a questionnaire about the current site, we have been developing a new IFP Online community Web site.

We are excited about the potential for the new site to enable alumni living in different countries to establish contacts with each other for years to come. It should also provide worldwide visibility for the IFP community; and link platforms already in use by alumni groups in different countries.

As part of the development process, **we are seeking alumni volunteers** to test the beta-version of the site. If you have excellent command of English, are an Internet user and actively involved in alumni affairs, or have good networking skills and a genuine interest in working within the IFP communications loop, please contact Mr. Dmitry Sherbakov at [dsheerbakov@gmail.com](mailto:dsheerbakov@gmail.com). And, if you have ideas about what you would like to see on the new site, please write to Ms. Toby Volkman, Director of Special Projects: [tvolkman-fordifp@iie.org](mailto:tvolkman-fordifp@iie.org). For IFP Online to be a dynamic and user-friendly space, we need your feedback and engagement in this process!

In this issue of the newsletter you will find a new section, "Reflections and Commentary," which we hope to continue on the community site. The inaugural essays offer a taste of what might come. We invite you to reflect on how your experience as a fellow has changed your life, your work, your ideas and your visions for the future.

Finally, a few notes on alumni growth and activity: As of mid-2008, there were 1573 IFP alumni, or over 36% of the projected total based on 4300 fellowships. Of these, 661 are from Asia/Russia, 497 from Africa/Middle East, and 415 from Latin America. The gender balance is exactly even. Two-thirds of these alumni studied outside their region; one-third remained in-region for their academic program.

It is very encouraging that more than 80% of alumni have returned to, or continue to reside in, their home country. Of those who are still abroad, many are pursuing further studies with funding from sources other than IFP, and almost all – those at home as well as abroad – report that they continue to be engaged in social justice work. We are thus confident in our assertion that the fellowships are furthering the broader development goals of the IFP in diverse ways.

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## Global Leadership for Social Justice Forum: January 28-February 2, 2008—Khon Kaen, Thailand

About 40 IFP alumni representing the program's six sites in Asia gathered in Khon Kaen for a workshop promoting networking and transnational interaction among fellowship recipients who have returned to their home countries. Building on prior experiences with LSJ Institutes (2002-2006), the Global Leadership for Social Justice Forum (GLSJF) is designed to support post-fellowship networking as well as strengthening IFP alumni capacities as social justice leaders.



**GLSJF Participants**

The GLSJF in Thailand adapted an analytic and action framework termed “Asset Based and Community-Driven Development” (ABCD). The forum emerged from the interests of Vietnamese and Thai alumni who have explored this approach in their communities, and through training events facilitated by the Coady Institute in Nova Scotia, Canada. International facilitators developed the workshop curriculum together with Coady faculty. A team of Thai and Vietnamese alumni served as resource persons, while IFP’s partners in Vietnam and

Thailand (CEEVN and ASF) developed the selection process to choose the alumni participants from the six Asian IFP countries. Faculty members from Khon Kaen university made the links for the alumni participants to engage with two village communities in the vicinity.

Among the aims of on-site field practicum and workshop sessions were helping participants to differentiate externally-driven development from community-driven or citizen-driven development; to understand how their own behavior and attitudes, and the culture of the institutions they represent, affect their capacity to facilitate community-driven development; and to understand the theoretical influences and tools that are integrated into asset-based approaches to community development. The workshop also focused on adapting and applying tools that help communities identify and mobilize their own assets, and critically evaluating the linkages between community-level practice and the larger institutional context.

Participants had an opportunity to brainstorm about how their learning from the GLSJF might be utilized in their communities and professional lives. Alumni also exchanged experiences in developing associations and networks in their home countries, and explored ideas for future regional workshops, online linkages, and other post-fellowship strategies to sustain the IFP community.

## Alumni Associations: News and Updates

### Vietnam: Giving Back to the Community

In January 2008, 44 alumni from 27 provinces joined the annual IFP Vietnam alumni planning meeting in Ha Noi. The meeting focused on identifying alumni resources and planning group sessions. Concerned about how to give back, alumni discussed current activities and future planning for the association.

During the meeting alumni split into groups to discuss group projects around education, health and HIV/Aids prevention, culture, IT, community development and fund raising for charity. Each group designed an action plan for the year 2008.

Specific activities were planned, including workshops on topics ranging from sharing knowledge of community development to research methods for studying migration in the Mekong delta. Alumni also contributed money to form two funds; one to provide scholarships to local children from poor families and the other for local community charities.

In December 2007, a workshop was held at An Giang University in southern Vietnam, attended by 25 alumni from Vietnam and Thailand. The workshop provided updated information and experiences in ABCD; asset-based, community-driven development.

Participants visited the Khai Tri Residential School in Phu Hoa village, where they shared information and experiences with the local communities based on the ABCD approach. At the end of the workshop, a cultural night with dancing, singing and play-acting was organized to summarize lessons gained from the workshop.

Realizing the relevance of the ABCD approach to poverty reduction in Vietnam, the alumni translated and compiled the training handouts into Vietnamese and planned to communicate the workshop impacts to other community associations.



*Alumni learning the ABCD approach*

*“Knowing what other alumni are doing, we realized that we need to do more for the community.”*

*Kieu Dung - IFP Fellow, Vietnam*

*Vietnamese Alumni*



*“Most of us come from difficult situations, and we got the privilege to have good education. Now we have to do something to help people with difficulties, like what IFP and CEEVN had done for us.”*  
*Hoa Minh Phuc – IFP Fellow, Vietnam*

## South Africa: Education for Social Justice

Delegates from across the country converged in Johannesburg, in February 2008, for the first Annual General Meeting of South Africa’s Alumni Association. IFP Program Director Louise Africa said “the association should be one of solidarity, where members are to be agents of social change.” The two-day event started with a gala dinner where delegates had an opportunity to introduce themselves and converse about how the IFP has assisted them to become captains of industry in South Africa. Many of the alumni hold key positions in the country. Dr. Wilmot James, former Ford Foundation Trustee, said, “IFP marries education

with vocation and achievement.”

Ricardo Wyngaard, now the Association’s Chairperson, drew up the constitution, which outlines the conditions and procedures of the organization. For two days, members examined the constitution, and deliberated on the ultimate mission of the Alumni Association. The outcome was a clear and concise vision statement: “Education for Social Justice.” Curbing social injustices is the objective of the International Fellowships Program; this is also the primary mission of the Association, which plans to hold workshops to highlight aspects of social injustice in South Africa.

## China: Alumni Resource Platform

IFP alumni are an important new addition to the pool of human resources for the NGO sector in China. The China office has been approached with requests from institutions for recommendations of IFP alumni as possible participants in new programming. Programs are ready to start, and funding is available, but staffing with capable people (especially those with some experience in remote areas) is a major bottleneck.

This need led the IFP China office to try to use technology to strengthen networks and post-fellowship participation of alumni. We wanted a simple, flexible, Web-based tool that would provide hyperlinked information about our fellows – short bio sketches by the fellows

themselves - that could be searched easily by keyword, and filtered by sector and region.

The resulting “China Alumni Resource Platform” (<http://www.china-ifp.net/platform/FellowsPlatform.htm>) uses “tiddly wiki” software (<http://www.tiddlywiki.com>) that is free and simple to use. It has much of the functionality of both wikis and blogs, and it provides several ways to automatically cross-reference and link keywords and text. No knowledge of HTML or other programming is needed. Chinese fellows and alumni provide their own data, and the platform operates as a kind of “collective resume,” open and accessible to the public.

## Nigeria: Alumni Association

The Nigeria IFP Alumni Association held its Annual Country Meeting at Yankari Game Reserve of Bauchi State in May, 2008. Participants came from all over the country to deliberate about how to improve on the successes of the 2007 meeting in Abuja. The activities included meetings, safari, swimming, cultural dances and campfires. The serenity provided by the unique Yankari environment enabled members to brainstorm and tackle lingering challenges. Some of the highlights of the retreat

include redrafting the association's constitution, electing a Board of Directors, and developing programs for 2008. Events in the works include fundraising development for the association, working with new fellow-elects, and developing future networking activities.

- *Ahmed Chinade, IFP Alumnus*

## Chile: Equitas Foundation's Intranet

Fundación Equitas in Santiago Chile, has been working with IFP since 2001. Since the start of our IFP partnership, Equitas has felt it necessary to have a consolidated communication platform for our growing roster of fellows. Our first action was the development of an Intranet system inside our regional website that IFP fellows could use to communicate with each other. This intranet also provided a simple method for Equitas to coordinate program activities and notices.

In the last year we created a unique site:

<http://intranet.fundacionequitas.org>, which provides online resources for Pre-Academic Train-

ing and for projects in the post-fellowship phase, including professional insertion workshops, workshops for writing, and social leadership workshops.

The site allows us to connect with other Latin American alumni (Chilean, Peruvian, Mexican, Guatemalan and Brazilian), and to invite their participation in our post-fellowship workshops. These workshops are designed to provide wider professional and academic recognition, to enhance capacity for entering labor markets, to share information about job opportunities, and to generate more thematic and social networks.

## Uganda: Alumni Association

*"To promote access to social justice through research, advocacy, capacity building, and promotion of moral and ethical values in Uganda,"* is the mission articulated by the IFP Uganda alumni association. Recent developments include strengthening the association's structure and defining core objectives. The association started informally in 2005 and has

since formally registered with the Ugandan government and developed in strength and numbers. The association has now developed a governing body and constitution, along with programmatic objectives ranging from reducing local corruption, promoting opportunities for disadvantaged youth and promoting initiatives that advance social justice in Uganda.

## Publications and Films

**Publications are an important tool to increase the visibility of alumni, fellows, and the programs. Here are some recent examples:**

***BEACONS OF HOPE***  
*Igniting the flame within...*  
 Produced by the  
 Ford Foundation International  
 Fellowships Program  
 New Delhi, India  
 A film by: *MOVING IMAGES*  
 Duration: 25 minutes

Since 2001 the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP) has offered fully-funded fellowships to talented individuals who have lacked access to quality higher education. It has helped bridge their knowledge gaps and prepared selected fellows to pursue post-graduate studies in social science disciplines at universities around the world.

The program believes that committed persons from countries most affected by poverty, marginalization or other forms of inequity can add significantly to the understanding of problems facing societies, and, with quality education, bring special energy and ability to their solutions. IFP operates in Russia and in twenty-one countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

This film highlights the origins, journeys and returns of four India IFP fellows, now alumni, and the challenges they faced on their way to becoming social justice leaders. It captures vignettes of these four protagonists as they share the impact that IFP has had on their lives. The film aims to inform, influence and inspire individuals about this unique and path-breaking fellowships model.

***KEEPING THE PROMISE***  
 Edited by Kimani Njogu and  
 Lizzie Chongoti  
 Twaweza Communications,  
 Nairobi, Kenya, 2007  
[www.twaweza.org](http://www.twaweza.org)

*“This collection of essays, **Keeping the Promise**, written by IFP alumni from Kenya is a worthy expression of the rigor, care and dedication that has gone into the careful recruitment of the winners of the program. It also underscores the dual element of training and leadership for social justice that IFP strives to achieve.”* - Dr. Tade Aina: Representative, Ford Foundation Office for Eastern Africa

***LIDERAZGO PARA LA JUSTICIAL SOCIAL: MEMORIA***  
*(Leadership for Social Justice: Memory)*  
 Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social  
 Oaxaca, Mexico, February 2008

This book is a result of a Leadership for Social Justice workshop that took place in Oaxaca, Mexico in 2006, attended by more than 60 fellows from Latin America and Mozambique. Special working groups on development studies, environment and health, education and communications, human rights and government focused especially on indigenous rights, social justice, citizen participation, education, and poverty in Mexico. This book gained special significance after the tragic social disturbances in Oaxaca in 2007.

***INCLUIR ES LA CLAVE***

*To include is the key: The Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program: Equaling opportunities for postgraduate education*  
 Edited by Pamela Diaz-Romero  
 Fundación Equitas, April 2008

Produced by IFP's Partner in Chile and Peru, *Incluir es la clave* examines the program's contribution and commitment in an introduction and four chapters: Making dreams come true; Equaling opportunities; Furthering trust and academic potential; Reaching new goals; and Ready to contribute. The book includes stunning color photographs and a 17-page insert that provides an English translation of the Spanish text.

*"We hope that the shining examples of these fellows will incentivate other organizations and agencies to join us and adopt some of the strategic components, thus making it possible for many others to follow their dreams."*  
 Pamela Diaz-Romero, Executive Director of Equitas Foundation

***ESTUDOS INDIGENAS:***

*Comparações, interpretações e políticas (Indigenous Students: Comparisons, interpretations and politics)*  
 Edited by Renato Athias and Regina Pahim Pinto  
 São Paulo, Brazil, 2008

This is the third volume in a series of IFP fellows' writings from Brazil.

***ORIGINS, JOURNEYS AND RETURNS:***

*Social Justice in International Higher Education.*

Edited by Toby Alice Volkman  
 Social Science Research Council,  
 New York, 2009

We are pleased to announce the anticipated publication (in early 2009) of *Origins, Journeys and Returns*. The book, which will be available in print and online formats, tells the story of the IFP, its fellows, and its impact, and includes case studies of the program in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

*"Interculturalism is a value that allows human beings to embrace one another according to distances and differences. It is an ideal that we should promote."*  
 -Jaqueline Caniguán  
 Caniguán

**Reflections & Commentary: Alumni Voices****In a Country of Colors**

By Jaqueline Caniguán Caniguán

I arrived in Mexico City in March, 2003. I arrived when the beginning of springtime is celebrated in the northern hemisphere. I was filled with hope about coming to CIESAS, because I had dreamed about studying linguistics at a postgraduate level for many years. The Masters' Degree program began with courses about teaching methods that lasted for three months. These courses consisted of giving us an initial preparation for subsequently entering the Master's Degree Program in Indo-American Linguistics on an official basis.

In the beginning, it was very unusual to observe that my classmates, most of whom were of native origin like me, felt so "Mexican" instead of feeling that they were part of their original groups. As Mapuches, we are born with the knowledge that we are Mapuches, instead of being Chileans. It was therefore strange for me to find myself among people who were indigenous like me, although they felt that they were part of a national entity. Another aspect pertained to their Catholic religiosity, which was so intense, with so many events associated with worshipping the Virgin Mary and the saints. Their deep religiosity disturbed me, and it was difficult to understand.

I also felt that my indigenous associates maintained a perspective according to which the government should provide everything for them, while I started with an outlook whereby we aspire to be autonomous. We spent three months becoming acquainted, and it was difficult for me to understand my fellow students' viewpoints. I simply could not understand why they would feel so "Mexican," and belonged to the Mexican nation to such an extent.

As time passed, I became familiar with the people of Mexico and their marvelous diversity. I refer to it as a country of colors, strong colors that remain undiminished in a person's memory and perceptions. That is how our Indoamerica is, too. We are different and diverse, and every group has its particular traits and its specificity. These characteristics are present within each person's history, and, ultimately, a person is contoured and formed with the history that he or she possesses and from which he or she originates. For me, as a Mapuche, my origin is fundamental. I cannot forget who I am. Then I understood that situations and events that are experienced by the peoples of the Americas are different, and that I could not expect others to be the same as us. Beginning with the details, I began to look at my own people and their colors, and to understand that living with differences and accepting others in terms of their particular nature is difficult, especially if a person is seeking to impose his or her perceptions, choices, and outlook.

Understanding and accepting us in terms of our diversity is not easy, and it is even more difficult when we belong to groups that have been transformed into minorities by dominant and hegemonic societies. When we do not have an opportunity to travel beyond our rural villages, we are unaware of the existence of a larger world. My grandfather says that the world was made for traveling, for making journeys within it and for gaining knowledge about it, but, with the current conditions of minority status and low economic levels that most indigenous peoples are facing, we do not travel and we do not "traverse" the world. Hence, academic scholarship extends beyond the education and technical knowledge that are acquired. It also allows sharing, knowledge, and, in particular, growth. Learning from others, broadening our perspectives, looking around in a circle, instead of merely looking in front of ourselves.

Today, time has passed, and my stay in Mexico gave me many gifts, principally learning to observe differences. Afterwards, I was fortunate enough to visit other countries, but now I travel more slowly, and I no longer expect other people to think as I do, nor do I believe that the Mapuches are always right. We are simply a people with a specific history, and this is the history that I pass on to my son. Interculturalism is a value that allows human beings to embrace one another according to distances and differences. It is an ideal that we should promote.

The situation does not merely involve opening their spaces by peoples who have become minorities; it also involves a majority society becoming capable of looking at itself and around itself. The world is a circle instead of a square.

My stay in Mexico allowed me to learn about a country of colors, but, within this colorful environment, I also had to learn to live with the loss of my mother, who died while I

was studying away from my homeland. Mexico was my companion in my deepest sorrow, and it was this country laden with scents, tastes, and stories, where I returned to the path for continuing to move forward, “receiving motivation,” as everyone told me. I learned the hard way. Through pain itself, I learned how to embrace my peers, how to listen to them, and how to let myself be listened to. We went to Chiapas, and, between our classes and the constant sounds of “tseltal,” “tsotsil,” and “chol” that we were hearing in the markets of San Cristobál de las Casas, I extended my gaze toward this stairway of life that I am traveling upon.

I am a mother today, and I trust that my son will learn to love himself along with his Mapuche origin, without being ashamed of his name or his language, but, just as I want him to have a clear, firm, and intense identity, I am also teaching him how this world is wider. It is this world where we owe one another respect and appreciation, each one of us, and I dream that my little Leliantü will not feel diminished even though he belongs to a minority.

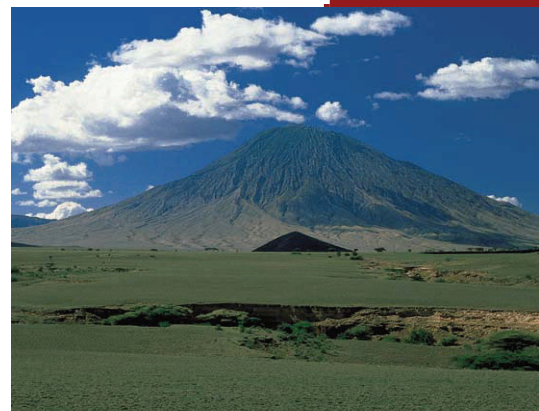
## **Theatre for Land Rights: Entertainment Education and Community Empowerment in Northern Tanzania**

**By Kitakaya Loisa**

As the Ol Doinyo Lengai spews hot lava into the air, engulfing itself in a dark cloud of smoke and sand, the local community is worried. Their fears, however, go beyond potential disasters from natural phenomena like volcanic activity. Their biggest worry is whether they will be able to generate revenues from the area’s ecosystem that combines the active volcano, and the salty Lake Natron, a breeding ground for millions of flamingoes found in Eastern Africa.

Although it could be argued that pastoralism provides for an economically viable and environmentally sound land management system in the semi-arid tropics, recent changes in the land regime in Tanzania compounded by ever competing (often clashing) land-use practices such as ecotourism, human settlement, and grazing are increasingly challenging nomadic pastoralism as practiced in its traditional sense [1]. More recently, a number of laws and national policies touching on land – both ownership and usage – have immensely affected the way communities relate to and perceive land and by extension their livelihoods. Chief among these laws and policies are The Land Act 1999, The Village Land Act 1999, and The National Land Policy 1997.

A key element of these changes is individual land ownership and issuance of title. Consequently, expansive land and freedom of movement thereon – the two imperatives on which pastoralism thrive – are diminishing [2]. Limited movement renders traditional disease control methods ineffective, with resultant losses of livestock since the government has rolled back on freebies after adopting a market-oriented economy in 1980s. In addition, private veterinary services are insufficient. Livelihoods are under threat.



*“There is great value in the use of entertainment education because it overcomes the challenges faced by audiences who might be illiterate. All can watch, listen, debate, and learn.”*

*-Kitakaya Loisa*

*The Ol Doinyo Lengai volcano in Tanzania*

It is against this backdrop that in 2007, I had the privilege of conducting a baseline study, as a prelude to an entertainment education program. Sand County Foundation Tanzania implements this project while The Ford Foundation funds it. I am now working on a script for an entertainment education program for village communities in four project sites in the northern part of Tanzania: Longido, Ngorongoro, Simanjiro, and Babati districts. There is great value in the use of entertainment education because it overcomes the challenges faced by audiences who might be illiterate. All can watch, listen, debate, and learn. The main themes of the entertainment education program are environmental management and land-use planning, with minor themes covering a broad cross-section of issues including governance, HIV and AIDS, education of girls, and accountability in the application of public resources. Proper environmental management will preempt resource-related conflicts.

[1] Loisa, K. (2006). The Future of Pastoralism in Kajiado District, Kenya: Climate and Cultural Penchants Pitted against Policy and Modernity. *Unpublished Paper*.

[2] Markakis, J. (2004). Pastoralism on the Margin. Minority Rights Group International. United Kingdom.



**Rosella Camte-Bahni**

### **Commencement Address by Rosella Camte-Bahni**

Delivered during the Cultural Production Mini-Commencement Ceremony  
Sherman Hall, Brandeis University, May 18, 2008.

First of all, I want to acknowledge everyone who made it possible for me to be here today: my sponsors, the Ford Foundation International Fellowship Program and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; my roommates from the Philippines and cohorts from the Ford Foundation International Fellowship Program; and my adviser, Dr. Mark Auslander, and second reader of my masters paper, Dr. Ellen Schattschneider. Thank you for the inputs and for prodding me to read the book, *Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon. It was worth the search at two libraries in Maryland because this powerful book published in 1963 articulated the issues of post-colonialism which still applies until today.

I am an Ibaloi. We are the indigenous people in Baguio City which was designated as the summer capital of the Philippines and is now the center of education, industry, and business in the northern part of the Philippines. I come from Loakan which is one of the remaining Ibaloi barangays or communities of Baguio City.

Upon returning home, I shall meet with members of my community to plan the establishment of a Center for Ibaloi Heritage and Loakan history. The center shall collect data through oral history interviews and provide educational activities. Adopting the features of a community museum, the Center shall integrate a social development thrust to respond to community issues and thus, enabling the center as a catalyst for change. Next year, our city is celebrating its centennial anniversary but the Ibalois in Loakan would be marking their presence in Baguio City for twice that period. The Center shall therefore be a fitting tribute to the Ibalois in Loakan whose tenacity amidst the expropriations of their ancestral land, challenges to their

indigenous practices, and onslaught of urbanization and globalization had transformed and adapted themselves so that their indigenous roots are sustained.

The idea to establish a heritage center in our community was inspired by the exhibition in our community, which I curated under my Directed Research course with Dr. Mark Auslander. The exhibition entitled "Chiva ni Duakan" featured the Ibaloi heritage and history of our community. Chiva is an Ibaloi term that means tracing one's roots through communal story telling sessions.

The exhibition and the subsequent Masters Paper which are the culminating activities of my program had been characteristic of the courses in the Cultural Production Program. By combining theory and practice, the program had developed both skills and conceptual analysis in cultural production.

I never thought that my three interests: advocacy for indigenous concerns, social development, and memory could all be addressed. Weaving skills training on photograph and material interpretation, multi-media production and exhibition development with social and post-colonial theories of cultural production, the MA Program in Cultural Production enabled me to access the power of representation. We, the Ibalois of Loakan, were able to access this power for our self-representation which resulted in a deeply moving experience of, borrowing Stephen Greenblatt's terms, "resonance and wonder." Through resonance, we realized how rich our heritage had actually been. By eliciting awe, we discovered what Fanon Franz said the "dignity, glory, and solemnity" about our ancestors and our past that had been obscured by colonial images and negative stereotypes.

I return to the Philippines confident that we can establish a functional center which shall facilitate the continuing experience of wonder and resonance; of self-representation, of empowerment and development. Let me read one comment written by a non-Ibaloi pupil who saw the exhibition: "The exhibit is nice and beautiful. I learned many things about the past...And I saw their clothes and what they do. I know now that they love their culture. And I love my culture, too, even if it is different."

When we are able to generate appreciation of one's culture while recognizing the value of others' cultures, I know that we will succeed in building understanding, respect and tolerance between cultures and one another; ingredients we need to foster human creativity, diversity and cooperation. We need these same elements for social justice.

I agree with Fanon's call for nationalist writers to "use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope" (Fanon 1963: 232).

I shall forever owe it to my Brandeis education, with its social justice mission, very dedicated and supportive faculty members and administrative personnel, and a very socially relevant program that I will be able to help facilitate the use of the past not only as a basis for hope but also for social activism and development. Thank you very much.

*Ms. Camte-Bahni is the recipient of the Cultural Production program's 2008 Engaged Scholarship award, presented at the 2008 mini-commencement ceremony.*

**"I never thought that my three interests: advocacy for indigenous concerns, social development, and memory could all be addressed."**

**-Rosella Camte-Bahni**

*“It is necessary to change my life, I must do something.’ There are situations in someone’s life when a person has to start to do something decisively to make a change.”*  
**D. Radnaeva**

## **Life is Worth Living**

**By D. Radnaeva**

This article is adapted from Newspaper Number One, 05 March 2008 and translated for IFP by Lubov Kovalenko

Galina Gorbatykh had to learn much to start her life from the very beginning. And she managed to do it. She will never forget the date of 13<sup>th</sup> September 1992. It was Sunday. The day was bright and sunny. Galina was coming back home in a car from potato field in Tarbagataiskiy region, Buryatia, Russia. One wrong movement of the driver, and the car overturned... Galina was thrown off the car through the windscreen. Delirious, she asked to straighten her legs. She didn't feel them.

She did not realize the seriousness of her situation, and was sure everything would be better in a week or two. Total understanding became clearer only in a year. She had three operations on her spine, and three years later, when her husband left her, she realized that she had really become a disabled person – no family, no work, and some old family friends disappeared. She did not want to live anymore; she did not want to meet anybody.

In summer 1995 Galina was invited to attend the Arts Festival for disabled people at the Opera Theatre. A group of chairpersons from the ensemble Preodolenie (overcome) were singing. They were happy, cheerful and full of life, and Galina thought: “It is necessary to change my life, I must do something.” There are situations in someone’s life when a person has to start to do something decisively to make a change.

It appears that there is always a way out of any situation; a person must find this way. Galina found it. She joined the Council of Disabled Peoples Association (Preodolenie), where she was responsible for the organization of cultural events. She conducted competitions, events and parties. Galina was the first person in Buryatia to organize a dance performance for wheelchair users.

In 2000 Galina was invited to work on the setup of the Barrierless Environment Fund. She lived that time on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and could reach her working place only with the help of her friends or relatives who carried her on their arms from the high level of the building. Later she won a grant for the issues related to disabled women’s problems. Galina was working hard as an advisor and conducted seminars for disabled people. Despite her success, she was not satisfied by the results and initiated the first beauty contest in Russia for the wheelchair women.

Galina was one of the organizers of the first film festival “Cinema without Barriers” at the City Arts Centre, Ulan-Ude. In 2003 she became the official representative of the Barrierless Environment Fund, as a committee member for approval of new building projects. Thanks to her and her colleagues, more than 650 ramps have been built in Ulan-Ude (compared to the neighboring city of Irkutsk, where there are only 10).

When Erzhenya Budaeva, her friend and colleague, won an IFP grant to study in the USA for two years, Galina thought: “Why not try?” She realized that it was not possible for her to continue her studies in Russia as there were no institutions with wheelchair accessible

buildings. With six months left to the end of the application period, she began to take French with a tutor, trying to brush up her knowledge gained earlier at school.

Galina prepared the application and applied for IFP grant. She succeeded (there were 20 grants and 420 applications), sent her documents to Laval University in Quebec, Canada, and continued to improve her French. At Laval University, she studied for a Master's degree in the administrative sciences faculty from January 2005 until September 2007.

Her dissertation was devoted to the integration of women with disabilities into the labor market.

To make her knowledge more profound Galina came to France for ten days. In Paris she attended a seminar on employment for disabled people. During a student trip a regular bus arrived instead of a specialized one with a lift platform. Young people, the organizers of the journey, waited for a long time before helping her to board the bus. Their fears were understandable – it is possible to be charged with sexual harassment in this situation. Galina had to explain to a young man in the group how to help her. Next time this young man consciously did not order a specialized bus but carried her on his arms and moved in circles dancing. In the evening he pronounced: "I am happy to hold a Russian woman in my arms."

During her studies Galina had an internship in a rehabilitation centre in Quebec. She was impressed by the approaches to everybody in society, not only disabled people. It is possible, for example, for a disabled person but also for a person with a broken arm or leg to have a rehabilitation course in the centre. The centre has a staff of 1300 specialists. Any injured person after treatment in a hospital is looked after in a rehabilitation centre where s(he) is taught the lost skills: how to go, to eat, to drive, to use a chair or prosthetic device, to work etc.

Galina returned from Canada full of thoughts, knowledge and ideas. She brought a photo exhibition of accessible buildings and devices. Together with her wheelchair user friends she dreams to create a rehabilitation centre in her home city Ulan-Ude, the capital of Buryatia. There is no centre of social rehabilitation there.

Galina assists the Chairman of the Barrierless Environment Fund to assess new buildings in terms of accessibility. She also promotes the idea of inclusive education. Why are children divided into different groups to study depending on their state of health? Sometimes it leads to total exclusion of a disabled child from the education process. Galina is also working as an external lecturer in the higher education institutions of Ulan-Ude.

She is surrounded by the friends, happiness radiates from her green eyes, and her soul is open to life.



*Galina Gorbatykh*



**“My project to write and rewrite the histories of adivasi and dalit communities of India would certainly liberate them from domination, or reverse the power equations.”**  
**Bhangya Bhukya**

## Writing History to Liberate Stigmatized Communities

By Bhangya Bhukya

### ORIGINS

I was born to illiterate agricultural laborers in a remote Lambada *thanda* (tribal hamlet) of Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh, which did not even have an approachable road till recently. I began my life as cowherd, as many children in poor peasant families do. Thanks to the Indian Government’s mid-day meals program, I was attracted to the village school, for then I was assured of at least one meal a day. I also escaped from bonded labour in the process and continued my schooling, staying in a government social welfare hostel. Poverty and social discrimination in all public spaces were the main hurdles to continue my studies. In fact, there was intense pressure on my father by a landlord of our village to put me as bonded labour under him.

My mother fought with my father and landlord and rescued me from bonded labour and encouraged me to go to school. As long I was in the social welfare hostel I did not suffer much from hunger. But from my intermediate college days hunger became my main enemy. I had to go to Khammam town, 35 kilometers from our village, to do my intermediate course. I needed at that time, Rs.100 for month to maintain myself in town. I got a scholarship but it came at the end of the course, and I had to discontinue my studies at one stage. One of my lecturers in the college came to know about my problem and promised to help me out financially. I was able to continue my studies only because of his support through graduation.

As I was the only literate person from my family and the first graduate from our *thanda*, there were great hopes on me both by family and *thanda* people. I dreamt of becoming a civil servant, the highest position in the Indian bureaucracy. After I began my Master’s history course at the University of Hyderabad I realised that I cannot do much for my family and community through a civil servant position. I was strongly determined to liberate my community from all hurdles only through writings. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s writing influenced me a lot in this direction. I also felt the importance of histories of dalit and adivasi communities, whose histories have been totally neglected in mainstream history. But I supposed that the Indian universities which were neo-Brahmanical *agraharas* would not encourage my kind of research and histories.

### JOURNEYS

Then I began thinking of doing my Ph.D. in the UK. I applied for Commonwealth Fellowships administered by the Government of India, but I did not make it through the final selections. It left doubts in my mind about the fairness of the process, for an adivasi like me. I came to know about the Ford Foundation IFP when its first cohort selection was over. I tried in the second cohort and got selected in all stages. This was a turning point in my career.

David Hardiman (a founding member of the subaltern studies project) at University of Warwick, UK, happily agreed to act as my Ph.D. supervisor. I could complete my Ph.D. within three years (2003-06) successfully because of his encouragement and interest in my research. During my course I was exposed to western academic training, particularly theoretic-

cal and methodological approaches, in addition to a great social life. I was excited when my works and ideas on social research were highly appreciated by academic staff of the University and many in other universities of UK. The rigorous academic training has sharpened my thought process.

### **RETURNS**

After I was awarded a doctorate by the University of Warwick I returned to India to resume my job at Osmania University, Hyderabad. The western experience had shaped my life remarkably in many aspects. I am now more confident in my field of study and getting an upper hand in all aspects. I have published a remarkable article on criminal communities in a reputed journal, and Orient Longman has agreed to publish my Ph.D. thesis. This has brought me lots of respect in the world of academia. I intend to write histories of adivasi and dalit communities of India and want to establish myself as great scholar of history. I believe that history constitutes power/domination and subordination. And my project to write and rewrite the histories of adivasi and dalit communities of India would certainly liberate them from domination, or reverse the power equations.

## **Announcements**

### ***Fellowship Opportunity from the Open Society Institute***

The New York City-based Open Society Institute (<http://soros.org/>) has announced the launch of a new fellowship program to enable individuals from around the world to pursue projects that inspire meaningful debate and help shape public policy. The Open Society Fellowship program will award a total of \$2 million during 2008 to scholars, journalists, activists, and others working in four areas: national security; citizenship, membership, and marginalization; authoritarianism; and new strategies and tools for advocacy and citizen engagement. Projects funded by the fellowships may include books, articles, documentary films, online media, and efforts to seed new campaigns and organizations. OSI will provide fellows with stipends and communications assistance and will integrate them into its networks of partners and grantees. Most fellowships will be awarded for a period of a year. "The Open Society Fellows will be idea entrepreneurs," said OSI founder and

chairman George Soros. "The fellowship will generate new thinking to tackle some of the most pressing questions of our day."

"Open Society Institute Invites Innovative Thinkers to Confront Global Challenges."

Open Society Institute Press Release 3/26/08.

<http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/pnd/15012211/story>

### ***Developing Social Justice Leadership: Asia Pacific Region***

On November 13-15, 2008, the alumni association of the East West Center (EWC) will hold an international meeting in Bali, Indonesia, bringing together researchers, EWC alumni, students, friends, and other professionals to discuss key issues in the Asia Pacific region. The panel described below will include Dr. Mary Zurbuchen from the IFP Secretariat in New York; Dr. Irid Agoes and Ms. Minh Kauffman, directors of IFP partner organizations in Vietnam, respectively; and, 3-4 IFP fellows who are EWC alumni and will share their unique stories. (Cont. on back)

### Announcements Continued...

A major challenge for higher education institutions and funders in this area is to train new leadership dedicated to equitable and sustainable development for the region's dynamic societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yet despite growing momentum of institution-building and creation of global academic linkages, questions about access and opportunity in higher education for underserved groups, or the role of universities in fostering just and equitable development, are often muted.

This panel will present experiences from Asian countries in fulfilling IFP's ambitious mandate to promote access and equity in higher education through support for individuals who demonstrate both academic talent and social commitment. We will show how IFP developed a unique and successful model for recruiting, selecting and supporting fellows; how the program has built effective partnerships with key academic institutions, including the East-West Center, who share IFP's goals and vision; and, how IFP's returned alumni are realizing IFP's promise through their engagement as social justice leaders in their societies.

For more information, see <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/bali2008>.

### **Latin American Studies Association**

A new form of regional cooperation has emerged, with the organization of two panels on indigenous rights and culture for the next meeting of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), which will be held in mid-2009 in Brazil. The IFP Latin America partners managed the selection process for alumni panelists; participation will be funded by IFP.

[www.fordifp.net](http://www.fordifp.net)

*The Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP) was launched by the Ford Foundation in 2001 to provide opportunities for advanced study to exceptional individuals who will use this education to become leaders in their respective fields, furthering development in their own countries and greater economic and social justice worldwide. Since the program's inception, over 3,300 Fellows have been selected from over 60,000 applications. To ensure that Fellows are drawn from diverse backgrounds, IFP actively seeks candidates from social groups and communities that lack systematic access to higher education. IFP's New York-based secretariat collaborates closely with partner organizations in 22 countries and territories highlighted on the map below. These groups supervise all recruitment and selection activities, and help ensure that the program's goals and implementation are grounded in local realities and reflect local needs.*

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