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News from the Wilson Center

The Wilson Center

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News from The Wilson Center

Notes from the Director - Summer 2018

My first year as Director of The Wilson Center is wrapping up and I can't believe how fast the time has gone! A few reflections from the past year:

First, University of Maine students are quite special. I have been so touched by the depth of conversations and connections I have had the privilege to witness this year. The Wilson Center's monthly Come to the Table discussions, in which students discuss various topics from their own spiritual and religious perspectives, provide an opportunity for students to engage in topics that usually aren't discussed in your average, daily conversations. Various topics from this year included: identity, death, perfection, and spirituality. Many of these discussions ask students to open their hearts and minds to one another, to be vulnerable, and to show compassion and welcome to their fellow students... and time and time again they show up to listen, share, and learn. It is an honor to watch students connecting with each other across lines of difference.



Second, The Wilson Center is blessed with a rich history that continues to inspire us today. When I first learned about Dorothy and Elwin Wilson (our namesakes) and their vision and hopes for thoughtful, socially-engaged students of faith, I couldn't wait to tell others. Today, when a new student or community member expresses interest in what we do, I am honored to share the Wilson Center's inspiring story with passion, while connecting it with our expanded and exciting mission today: **to create progressive, ecumenical, and multifaith dialogue for the University of Maine community and through worship, study, and service, to work for social justice, honor diversity, and offer opportunities for spiritual growth.**

Third, we at the Wilson Center could not fulfill our mission without the support of our many friends, many of whom are University of Maine and Wilson Center alumni from over the years. Thank you for your support of our work, both today and in the future!

Lauren J. Conner

Weekly Dinners at Wilson Center Continue



The tradition of breaking bread together continues at The Wilson Center! Every Wednesday during the academic year, students and community members gathered for a meal followed by a variety of spiritual/multifaith programs. Wednesday Dinners provide an opportunity for students of various faiths, cultures, and perspectives to learn with and from one another. Some highlights from this year's Wednesday Dinners include: learning about the ancient practice of the mandala, discussions on immigration and social justice, celebrating Chinese New Year with authentic cuisine and creating lanterns, and learning about the Jewish concept of the mezuzah and creating our own. Dinners at The Wilson Center continue to be one of our most beloved traditions.

Please consider supporting our work!
Contributions can be made through the
University of Maine Foundation by
visiting our website at
www.umaine.edu/wilsoncenter/donate

or

Checks can be mailed to
The Wilson Center at 67 College Avenue,
Orono, ME 04473



Community Service as Common Ground

The Wilson Center also continued our tradition of community service this year. Below are some photos of students from the Wilson Center, UMaine Hillel, Muslim Student Association, and Cru participating in Food AND Medicine's Solidarity Harvest, an annual meal-packing event that provides local families with enough groceries for a full Thanksgiving dinner. Community service and volunteerism are values and actions that our many world religions hold in common. By bringing students of various faiths together, we can make a difference!



Do you have an idea or suggestion for a service project for our students? Please contact The Wilson Center at wilsoncenterorono@gmail.com or 207-866-4227.

Wilson Center Co-Sponsors “Make Shift Coffee House”

Have you heard of this new Maine-based initiative? A **Make Shift Coffee House** is where people with differing political views can meet and learn from each other. There’s coffee and food and live music. Guided by a neutral moderator, all voices and views are heard and respected.

It’s not about persuading each other. We ask questions and hear what’s important to the “*other side.*” It’s okay if we don’t agree. All are welcome. All that’s required is a desire to understand and the willingness to listen.

Understanding Others’ Political Views

What influences YOUR vote?

Make Shift Coffee House

Guided by a neutral moderator, all voices and views are heard and respected. It’s not about persuading each other. It’s about getting past 10-second sound bites. It’s about learning from each other’s life experiences. We ask questions and hear what’s important to the “other side.”

It’s okay if we don’t agree. All are welcome!

FEBRUARY 15, 2018

THURSDAY 6-8 PM

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE ORONO

WELLS COMMONS

Sponsored by **The Wilson Center and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies**

Free food · Live music · No cover

For more info visit: MakeShiftCoffeeHouse.com
or call/email Craig Freshley, 729-5607, Craig@Freshley.com

- *Do your values play a role? Your education? Race? Gender? Religion?*
- *Do you extend your opinion beyond the polls to boycotts, or donating to campaigns or events?*
- *Stopped voting at all?*



This February, The Wilson Center was honored to co-sponsor the first Make Shift Coffee House at the University of Maine. Together with the Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies program, we gathered our community together around the topic: “What influences your vote?” Around 40 people participated, from Democrats to Republicans, Socialists to “Make America Great Again” supporters. We listened, we learned, and we came away with a deeper understanding of one another!

SCOPE Grants

The mission of the Wilson Center's SCOPE (Student Community Outreach Program Experience) Grants is to provide opportunities for students at the University of Maine to explore their values, to act on their concerns, and to build human connections through programs that are designed and led by students. This year the SCOPE Committee chose two projects to fund, both of which address food insecurity in the local community.

This year's winners were...

Rachel Alexandrou is a senior at the University of Maine studying Environmental Horticulture. Her project will be to collaborate with the UMaine greenhouse to provide unique fruit and vegetable cultivars and growing support to low-income families. This project works to address the problem of the increasing food insecurity in Maine, while also attempting to help children and their parents reconnect with each other, their food, and the natural world through the joy of gardening.



Danielle Daigle is in her second year as a graduate student at the University of Maine School of Social Work. Her project will benefit the Black Bear Exchange by purchasing the materials necessary to begin blanching vegetables, which is a process in the freezing of vegetables that extends the "shelf-life" of these perishable yet important food items.

Dorothy Clarke Wilson Peace Writing Prize

Dorothy Clarke Wilson was an internationally known peacemaker who was committed to writing on social issues and world peace. To encourage today's UMaine students to share in this commitment, Dorothy established a \$500 annual award for the best written work on a peace-related topic.

This year, students were asked to respond to the following quote:

"All we say to America is, 'Be true to what you said on paper.' If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of the press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right."

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from "I've Been To The Mountain Top," April 3, 1968

This year's winner was: Aliya Uteuova



Pictured: Wilson Center Director Lauren Cohen, Winner Aliya Uteuova, Wilson Center Board President Phyllis Brazee at the 2018 Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast

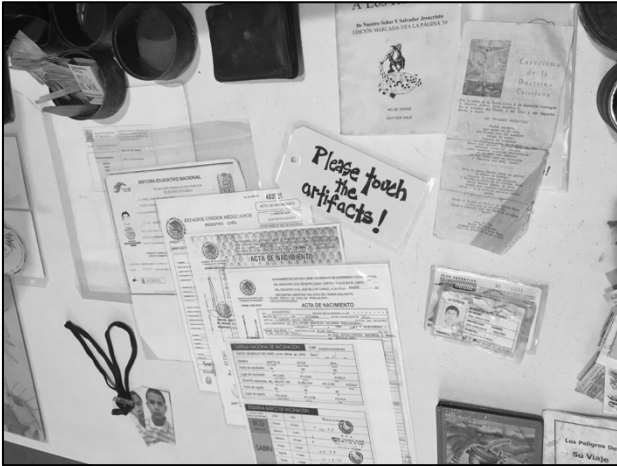
Honorable mentions: Emma Brickman, Maggie Aydlett, Kathyn Klebon, Sheldon Green

You can read Aliya's winning poem on our website at:

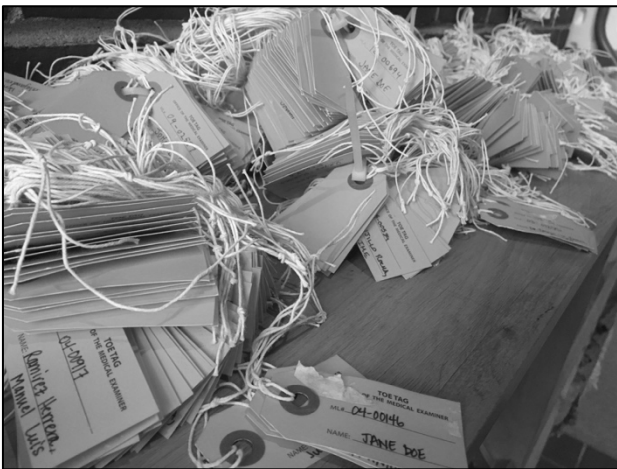
<https://umaine.edu/wilsoncenter/programs/peace-writing-prize-2018/>

Art Exhibits at Wilson Center in 2017-2018

The Wilson Center hosted two different art exhibits this year.



The first was a visceral display of the human side of immigration along the US-Mexico Border. The migrant trails that lead from Mexico to the Southwest are littered with things travelers leave behind as they seek out better lives and opportunities in the United States. Humanitarian groups along the border, such as No More Deaths, will venture into the desert to provide aid such as food, water, and medical supplies, and often these groups will collect items that migrants have left behind.



The exhibit at The Wilson Center was curated by Arizona artist Deborah McCullough, who uses some items found along the trails in her three-dimensional artwork. University of Maine doctoral student Sara Lowden, originally from Tucson, Arizona, made it possible for the Wilson Center to display elements of McCullough's work. The exhibit provided opportunities for our students to engage in discussions about immigration from a human point of view, rather than a political one.

The second exhibit, curated by another doctoral student, Susan Smith, was part of a collective community project called "Uprooted: Some Sense of Home." The project displayed the concept of "home" through the eyes of the Orono community: from professionals and students, to seniors in area nursing homes and those living in shelters. The recent immigrant/refugee crisis around the world has deeply affected so many stuck in this place of neither-nor, fleeing their homes but unable to integrate in the spot where they land. The homes on display at The Wilson Center were a small sampling of many, many pieces that participants have created (continued on next page).



The Wilson Center

For Spiritual Exploration & Multifaith Dialogue

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Orono, ME 04473

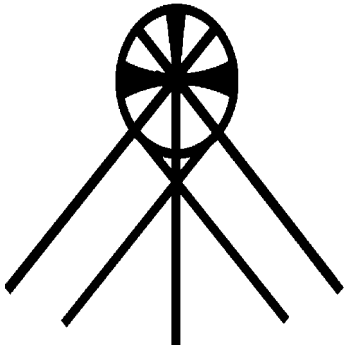
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Website: www.umaine.edu/wilsoncenter Look for us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter!

Art Exhibits at The Wilson Center (continued)



A close up of a few of the many small homes on display at The Wilson Center, as part of the project "Uprooted: Some Sense of Home." Future sites of the exhibit include the University of Maine, the state capitol, and beyond.

This project was made possible in part by a Wilson Center SCOPE Grant in 2016-2017.