WINTER 2010

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

A publication of the Padnos International Center and Area Studies

CONTENTS

AN INVITATION

Mark Schaub, Padnos International Center

Growing up in a small Wisconsin town, I was fortunate to have a foreign language teacher as a father, one who served as the international student advisor for all the exchange students who studied at our local high school, and later as the regional Rotary exchange advisor. Before I ever had the chance to study abroad or work abroad myself, the world came to our town, our school, our home. I don't think we ever made a family day trip to Milwaukee or Madison without a Chilean or Ghanaian or Austrian in the car with us!

Hospitality is a mindset. And GVSU folks are hospitable. We in the Padnos International Center probably have more contact with overseas visitors or students than most other GVSU units, and we host visitors as part of our professional and personal lives—with that distinction often quite blurry. Yet we're also continually amazed at the stories GVSU's guests tell us about the gracious GVSU students, faculty, and staff who go out of their way to make new arrivals feel welcome. Whether taking a student or visiting scholar to a local orchard or football game, or inviting them to their own home, Lakers show their true character as hospitable people.

Padnos International Center, on behalf of the College of Interdisciplinary Studies, administers over $70,000 in competitive internationally focused faculty/staff grants per year. Nearly all of them support travel by GVSU employees abroad. Yet many on campus are unaware that the Faculty/Staff Exchange Grants as well as the Internationalization Grants can be used to bring the world to GVSU. Faculty going to another culture or nation is an important activity, as those experiences can effectively transform the teaching and curriculum that students experience here in Michigan. But bringing in key individuals to enhance the global learning in West Michigan can sometimes do even more for our community. It can also be more hospitable. In most cultures, it's best to invite others to one's own home first, rather than inviting one's self to our counterpart's home. Consider using PIC grants to first bring a guest to our campus, and learn from their expertise, perspectives, and experience. Provide hospitality for these visitors and it's likely you'll get a sincere invitation to visit your guest in his or her home institution or city. Completing that circle of hospitality can sometimes lead to lifelong collaborations, learning, and friendship.

Inviting international visitors and students into your life pays off in so many ways. Their perspectives help you see your own family traditions, your home town, and your favorite places with new eyes. As a kid, I learned about my home town through the eyes of the world. And my town became the world.

Proud People in a Land Stripped Bare

Peter Wampler, Geology

There are so many rains that attempt to extinguish the fire of hope that burns in the soul of the Haitian people; hurricanes, environmental devastation, poverty, starvation, government disarray, and infrastructure that is not functioning. In many ways Haiti is a land that is missing its skin and hair. Centuries of deforestation have left the country without protection from hurricanes and drenching rains. Veins lay exposed at the surface spilling water and soil, the lifeblood of rural Haitians, into the Caribbean Sea. The water that emerges from countless small springs in the mountains appears deceptively clear and clean, but is actually contaminated with bacteria and parasites that kill thousands of Haitian children every year. There is no easy way for Haitians to determine whether their water is contaminated, leaving many to play Russian Roulette with every sip of water.

I first went to Haiti in 2007 at the request of some friends of ours whose son, Tom Braak, has been working in Haiti for about 10 years. He is the director of an organization called Faith in Action International (http://www.faithinactionint.org/). Their focus is on providing literacy, clean water, agricultural education, and tree nurseries for Haitians near the village of Verrettes. When I returned from my first trip, in March 2007, I knew that I wanted to go back and help in any way I could. I presented information about my first trip to my introductory geology class that fall and it happened that sitting in a seat in that class was Andrew Sisson. Andrew was very interested in working on water projects in developing countries. We continued to talk and decided to submit a summer scholar application for the following summer to return to Haiti to study the springs in more detail. We were awarded a Summer Scholar grant and travelled to Haiti in the summer of 2008 to learn about the water quality of springs in rural Haiti.

We awoke early on the first day to beat the ninety-degree, 90% heat and humidity. Our goal was to hike to several springs high in the mountains. Haiti is a land of many mountains. Columbus, the first European to set foot on the island, reportedly crumpled up a sheet of paper and tossed it on the table when describing what the island was like to the King of Spain. Springs in the high mountains flow out of limestone, and are often surrounded by large trees and lush vegetation. One of the springs we visited was a small spring called “Ma Bef sous”. There was a line of small children patiently waiting with their assorted water containers consisting of 2 gallon jugs, five-gallon buckets, etc. The spring was located beneath the roots of a large tree which had been dug out to create a small cavern below the tree. We waited for about 30 minutes while a small boy, probably 6 to 8 years old, methodically and carefully filled a small aluminum cooking pan with water and transferred it to a five-gallon bucket. Someone had clearly taught him how to be careful not to contaminate the spring. As we waited we were somewhat dismayed to see a donkey tied to a tree above the dugout tree roots urinating onto the ground. We asked the young boy, through our interpreter, whether he thought the water was clean and safe to drink. He responded that of course it was as it was coming straight out of the ground. We collected our samples, made our measurements, and said our goodbye to the children. We returned to the house that evening and cultured the sample to determine the amount of bacteria present. The results almost took our breath away. The water that the young boy perceived as clean would not have been considered safe to even touch by United States EPA standards. It was experiences like this that really enforced the need for clean water in Haiti.

Travel in Haiti is a far cry from the convenient roads and cars many of us are used to in the United States. One morning Andrew and I found ourselves without transportation for one of our field visits so we used what the local people refer to as a “tap tap”. Tap taps typically consist of a 1980s vintage Toyota pickup which has been modified so that the bed has high rails onto which all manner of people, animals, and items can be attached. Our tap tap ride was shared by about 20 other people, some sitting on benches and many standing and holding on the rails as if they were riding the “L” in Chicago. We traveled up the valley for about 20 minutes flying past other tap taps and greeting each with a toot of the horn. We passed one tap tap with 3 cows and a pig and two unfortunate men desperately trying to keep the animals from bolting. On market days, it was not uncommon to see live goats hanging from their feet on the rails on their way to be slaughtered and sold for meat.

The market was open two days a week and was somewhat similar to a farmers market in the United States, except much larger, and perhaps a bit more chaotic. The market took place in a sprawling square filled with small tables and covered areas. Off to one side was a large cement slab where the butchering of animals took place -- we did not feel the need to look any closer at this area. As we wandered through the market our noses were met with a symphony of smells from spices to animal parts which we were hard pressed to identify. There were many flat baskets filled with rice and beans, the most common meal for many Haitians. There were also items we might find at Meijer such as medicine and portable radios. The mood was festive and everyone seemed to be selling or buying the things they needed. Powdered bleach was readily available for a few pennies a bag. We purchased some just in case we found ourselves thirsty in the mountains and needed to decontaminate the water.

At the end of our tap tap ride our interpreter paid the driver several goude, about $1, for our ride and we set off to visit a large spring that piped water to the valley below. This spring was capped. This means that where it emerged from the hillside had been covered with a concrete enclosure to protect it from contamination. We doused ourselves with water to cool off and took our samples. We wanted to sample a spring nearby that was not capped to compare the quality. At the spring we met a young woman, perhaps 20 years old. She led us to a spring higher in the mountains where she was getting water for cooking. As we sampled this spring and made our measurements our interpreter and guide, Jean-Rony, chatted with the young woman. She seemed very happy and was all smiles. She filled her five gallon bucket and proceeded to lift it onto an old t-shirt she had arranged on her head. We then climbed up a series of steep trails over which I had difficulty even walking, while the young woman easily climbed alternately between holding the bucket with one hand and simply balancing it on her head. I did not observe her spilling a drop even though the bucket had no lid. This sort of resilience and drive was common among the Haitians I met. There was a resourcefulness and pride that struck me, and I find I still cannot understand why things are as they are in Haiti.

One day when we were without transportation we spent the day in the town where we were based, mapping the water system. The town’s water comes from a very large spring above the town that is enclosed in a concrete building and provides water to the roughly 10,000 people that live there. Water is carried down via pipes which are partially buried. The town has a large elevated water tank, similar to one you might see in rural America, which was apparently installed by a former president of Haiti who was from the town. The tank has never been used. The system apparently never had enough hydraulic head to lift water from the

spring into the tank. So water currently flows by gravity from the large spring through the pipes. The system provides very sporadic water for the town and is prone to losing pressure due to many improper connections. We saw more than one “unofficial” opening made in the pipe which was plugged using a corn cob. We knew that these openings in the water system were a vector for diseases and parasites. We passed one that was sucking air into the system near the ground. During a heavy rain this would undoubtedly suck in contaminated water. I hope to interest Engineers Without Borders and student volunteers to help repair the system. Other large engineering projects in the country are in a state of disrepair due to lack of resources to repair the structures.

In the 1950’s the Corps of Engineers from the United States built Peligre Dam, damming the Artibonite River. Sedimentation in the reservoir and poor maintenance have reduced the output of power from the dam to 1/3 of its capacity. As we drove toward the dam we could see increasing signs of electricity transmission lines and infrastructure, as well as fish from the reservoir being sold along the road. Power lines were in disrepair and more than once we saw what looked like metal coat hangers loosely attached to the main power line running to a small stone hut or home. As we approached the dam I was struck by the immensity of the huge structure amid what is an otherwise very rustic countryside. Near the dam there was a large rusty cement mixer, which was used to build the dam, with several large trees growing inside of it. There was no real town or offices near the dam, just a few fenced off areas and people selling things at a market near the shores of the reservoir. We walked out onto the dam and looked out onto the reservoir to see one lone boat and a raft of garbage floating near the dam. We looked down river and saw the rocky gorge through which the Artibonite flows before emerging into a broad, fertile valley. We saw what looked like a dead goat or cow floating down the river. The entire scene reminded me of the post-apocalyptic scenes from the Post Man or the Mad Max films. I left the dam wondering why United States power companies could not send personnel to help maintain this structure every 3-5 years; surely we have the time and resources to help out a neighboring country in this way.

We left the dam and traveled downstream to visit a famous waterfall that we had heard about called “Cascades de Saut d´Eau”. As we got closer to the area of the waterfall we passed many cemeteries where the above ground vaults had been opened. We asked our interpreter about this and he said that the bodies had been stolen for voodoo ceremonies. As we got closer to the waterfall the road got noticeably better, and it was paved with concrete and had lined drainage ditches.

We passed crews working on the road as we approached the waterfall. We walked down a large, newly built, walkway to one of the most beautiful waterfalls I have ever seen. Water cascaded out of caves and over the lip of the limestone rock falling onto terraces of limestone. Small bits of candle and burn marks on all of the trees surrounding the waterfall gave testimony to the popularity of this waterfall by people practicing voodoo. We also saw many small bottles of clear liquid placed under the waterfall. According to our interpreter, these bottles contained a locally made “moonshine” made of sugar cane which people had placed there to help break their alcohol addiction. As we explored the waterfall a large thunderstorm began and we decided that it would be prudent to return to the car, quickly. The ensuing downpour was impressive in its duration and volume. Streets and gullies filled with water.

During our last full day in Haiti we decided to hike into the high mountains to see what life there was like, away from the towns. We started at about 2,400 feet and reached an elevation of almost 4,000 feet above sea level. The high mountains were cooler and very rugged, very different from the lowlands surrounding the Artibonite River. We ascended very steep slopes of limestone with pockets of rich brown soil. Each pocket of soil big enough to plant crops was planted with corn, sorghum, or beans. The people living in the high country seemed to have rarely if ever seen “blancs” as they referred to Andrew and me. Children would emerge from the trees and brush shouting “blancs” and we were soon shadowed by a contingent of curious children. Spring water appeared to be scarcer on the high plateau, but crops grew well in the cooler air. We saw many tree species which were not abundant in the lower elevations such as pines which looked very much like Michigan White pines. We hoped to make it to the remains of a French fort which we had seen from the valley below, but we did not have enough time or water to reach our goal. We descended through a Dr. Seuss like landscape of limestone pinnacles several meters high known as Pinnacle Kerren. These result from slightly acidic rain and groundwater dissolving the rock.

As we returned to Port au Prince we stopped at a resort for tourists along the Caribbean Sea called Moulin Sur Mer. The resort is located on the remains of a French sugar cane plantation. Several buildings apparently survived the revolution when slaves revolted and destroyed most of the other plantations and plantation owners in Haiti. The wealthy resort stood in sharp contrast to the poverty and simplicity of the rural mountains that we had explored the previous several weeks. Although we left Haiti the next day, the people and the land will remain in my heart and mind forever. I hope to return with more students in the future to continue to learn more about this baffling and beautiful place.

A Diary of Haiti

Andrew Sisson, Natural Resource Management

In two quick hours the scenery from my small airplane window changed from 60-plus story condos and hotels lining the flat Miami coastline to a floodplain surrounded by towering mountains that appeared to be on fire as smoke rose from the dull grey city below. As we circled into Port au Prince International Airport we flew over a large community, built entirely of tin covered shacks stacked practically on top of each other. We quickly passed over this slum area and then the larger city of Port au Prince came into view, built in the valley of the surrounding mountains and overflowing up the side, skyward. Here the buildings were no taller than four stories, each one built of cement and each a similar design.

As we approached the runway I saw a cement wall covered in graffiti and topped with razor wire, barricading the airport from the city and from any trespassers. I will never forget this moment as the first time I saw the famed white letters "UN" surrounded by light blue painted on the only buildings next to the airport property.

Day 1
6.16.2008

"As I stepped off the plane the dense heat hit my face first. While walking across the runway toward the terminal the smell of the city overwhelmed me. I could see smoke from the plane settling over the buildings carrying the stench of burning plastic and trash".

The city of Port au Prince was exciting. It is home to over 2 million, and people were everywhere. They lined every inch of the streets, selling all kinds of colorful goods, trying to earn any money they could. Children ran to the trucks stopped in the road and cleaned the windows with dirty rags. Trucks, smaller than Ford Rangers, drove everywhere, with twenty to thirty people standing in the bed. This popular form of public transportation is called a tap tap.

My first night in the city was spent in a fortified hotel with an armed guard at the gate. Outside my window were the sounds of the city still very alive after dark. A loud Christian revival could be heard around the corner as the preacher shouted and sang the promises of the Bible into a loud speaker. I awoke in the morning to a sticky sweat as the morning temperature was already a humid 80°F. Outside my window I saw up-close the culprit that covered the city in smog. An abandoned hillside of trash smoldered, one of hundreds throughout the city.

Before we headed north to the smaller town of Verrettes, my professor, Peter Wampler, Faith in Action International (FIAI) Director, Tom Braak, his wife, Felcita, and I ventured into the hectic city for supplies. We drove in a small truck of our own, and Tom skillfully navigated the pothole ridden roads like a pro, hitting only the smaller holes, which were still larger than the worst in the States but he avoided the even larger holes. Unlike the U.S., large superstores are not easy to come by in Haiti, so several stops are required to pick up only a few goods. By 2:00 p.m. we had finally finished our errands, packed our luggage and were heading north to the area where we were going to be testing water and studying how rural Haitians meet their daily hydration needs.

For four hours Tom sped down the only paved two-lane "highway" in central and northern Haiti. Much of the road was nestled between the Caribbean coastline to the West and mountains immediately to the East. We eventually turned East ourselves heading up the Artibonite Valley, which is carved out by the Artibonite River, the largest in the country. Small towns of rickety buildings came and went as did the paved road. Reaching our final destination came as a welcome sight for both Peter and I as our bodies could barely take any more jostling in the crammed truck cab.

"I have never seen a road less like a road. For an hour and a half we climbed over mountain tops, from one to the next, only traveling five miles. The so called road consisted of a walking path for one tire while the other tumbled over gravel, boulders, and bedrock. At every spring we hiked to I was delighted to see groups of young smiling faces greeting us, interested in everything that we were doing. I think the most heart wrenching part was how far each of these tiny children had traveled to fetch water for the day's chores and cooking, some of them had traveled miles, for the second time that day."

Day 7
6.23.2008
We drove as near to the springs as possible but we still had to walk good distances down into valley bottoms where the springs started to test them for presence of harmful Coliform bacteria so that we could estimate the amount of water surfacing. Along the way kids of all ages ran to greet us yelling out, "blanc! blanc!", pointing out our obvious skin color difference. As we took our water measurements and brought water samples in bottles back to our house for analysis, we gradually grasped a better understanding of the reliance the people of Haiti have on the mountain springs. Unfortunately, after the first few days of running water samples, we quickly learned, what we had expected and feared, that most of the water from the springs was badly contaminated.

"…On our way back out of the mountains we were stopped by a family. The little kids had extreme burn scarring all over their bodies. We asked them what happened, and they led us to their house on top of the mountain and explained how lightning had struck their house weeks earlier. The lightning had killed two of their sisters and severely wounded three others. The children were no more than eight years old with scars crossing their stomachs, coursing across their arms, legs, and feet. The wounds still healing were purple, without any dressings. There was no medical help. What little money the family had was spent on the funerals of the lost siblings."

While each day I spent in Haiti passed faster, each day of work brought new smiling faces, and many sad faces, all with a look of hope for something more, something better. The hope of the Haitian people that I experienced everyday was expressed in different ways, but perhaps the most evident was in the way parents looked at their children, hoping that someday life would come easier. Through my research in rural Haiti and my three week experience living there I came to better understand true poverty. While I know that Haiti is nearly the poorest country in the world and is the most densely populated in the Western hemisphere, seeing it firsthand was a heart wrenching, mind numbing experience. This kind of trip causes those who experience it to want to do something without knowing where to start; it gave me a hope for a people whose lives seem so difficult.

Reflections on the Great Wall

Alex Delamar, Accounting

I remember walking the halls of the downtown GVSU Pew campus, being intrigued by a series of photographs portraying a magnificent view of the Great Wall. As I gazed upon the pictures I could only dream that one day I too might experience something that spectacular. On May 5, 2009 my dreams became reality. I departed on my first plane flight ever; my destination was Shanghai, China. I had enrolled in the China Summer School study abroad program led by professors Ge Ling Shang and Peimin Ni of the Grand Valley State University philosophy department. I left for China wanting to learn more about the culture, the language, and the government. Now I am living and studying in China, something I never thought I would be able to do.

During my study abroad trip to China I was able to visit the Great Wall. The Great Wall of China was a defensive mechanism built for protecting China from invasions. It stretches over four thousand miles, from Shanhaiguan, in the East, over a vast territory in northern China, to Lop Nur in the West. The construction of the Great Wall started over two thousand years ago, and continued, periodically, for over a millennium. The section that we visited was relatively new, said to be about 600 years old, built during the Ming Dynasty. Our group hiked a grueling trail until we were able to stand upon the eroded stone steps of the Great Wall. The majestic view, the looming hills, the disjoined stone, the plant overgrowth, and the neglected wall all composed the perfect image. The voices of our group echoed amidst the tranquil hillsides. The stones shifted beneath our feet. The wall was serene and inspiring, something the photographs back at GVSU just could not capture. The other-worldly atmosphere of the place put me in a deeply reflective mood.

To me the Great Wall symbolizes not only China, but also ancient civilizations engaging in diplomacy and conquest. Like the rest of the world, the lands of China were once controlled by armies. Only the fiercest army could claim the most expansive empire. The Great Wall was erected to protect China from these invading armies. The Great Wall has long lost its military significance. Not only has the development of modern weaponry made it almost irrelevant, the world has developed a more sophisticated or less imposing form of expansive conquest. With globalization and the information age, conquering armies have become relatively ineffective; consequently, today's world is conquered by economics and political influence. The concept of "neo-colonialism" illustrates this kind of change. As a result, the Great Wall has become a World Heritage site, a symbol of a great nation's past, a tourist attraction, and a place for reflection.

No longer isolated from the rest of the world, China now enjoys unprecedented economic growth. This newfound economic strength and, along with it, increased military funding, has naturally attracted worldwide attention. In the United States, many have raised questions about China's military spending, and consider China a potential threat.

However, people seem to have forgotten that the intertwining of a nation's influence throughout the world via trade and globalism would mitigate its potential for military conflict. The fact that the United States continues to carry a big stick around the entire world, regardless of its global influence, is itself a provoking factor that hinders the trust of foreign countries and forces other nations to increase their own defense. Instead of questioning China's growth and military strength, the United States might wish to focus more on positive foreign relations and continue to promote global economic growth.

The United States military can be considered a modern great wall that prevents strong positive foreign relations with certain countries, especially in the East. This wall is not a physical barrier built with bricks and stones, but rather a wall built upon formidable military power. The United States military has over 700 installations worldwide, 72 nuclear-powered submarines each capable of firing over 300 warheads within 15 minutes of instruction, and 12 of the world's 21 aircraft carriers. It alone has military expenditures greater than all the rest of the world's military spending combined. The looming presence of the American military instills mistrust and fear within countries that are on the other side of this metaphorical wall. As Henry Rosemont pointed out, "the United States […] has almost 10,000 nuclear warheads and sufficient delivery capabilities to obliterate every Chinese city with a population of a half-million or more, and still have more than enough of a stockpile to hold the rest of the world at bay." With this kind of power it is easy to see why countries like China would criticize the United States.

If a strong global military presence prevents trust and positive relations with other countries, then maybe the United States should reconsider its position in the world. In the article "Is China a Threat?" author Henry Rosemont states that the United States must minimize its own military reach outside of U.S. borders to improve foreign relations worldwide. "A reduction of U.S. threats to the world – from nuclear weapons, regional wars such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and potential conflicts with Iran and North Korea – would decrease the likelihood of confrontation with China as well as undercut any rationale for China's own increased military spending. Such a shift in U.S. national security strategy would not only increase the security of China and the United States but the world as well." I think Henry Rosemont makes a good point. The United States military could be said to represent a great wall, a barrier that prevents anyone from escaping American influence; whereas the Great Wall in China represents the mentality of self defense as opposed to conquest. Even today China has no single military installation outside its borders. If the United States were to reduce its military expenditures, this would send favorable signals to foreign countries and most likely open the doors for healthier foreign relations, because countries would no longer have to constantly strategize around United States' military superiority. As globalization increases, this type of strategy could be very beneficial and may be worth implementing. China no longer needs their great wall, and maybe someday the United States won't need theirs either.

PIC's Partnership Delegation Grant: Advancing Collegiality, Collaboration, and Scholarship

Esther Billings, Mathematics

Last year I had the opportunity to travel to Turkey with one of the Padnos International Center's more recent initiatives, the international partnership delegation grant. This small, interdisciplinary group of GVSU faculty and staff traveled to Ankara, Turkey where we spent a week exploring the history and culture of Turkey and visiting our partner university, Middle East Technical University (METU). The team was led by Dr. Jim Goode, a GVSU professor, historian and former director of GVSU's Middle East Studies Program. Dr. Goode is also the author of several award-winning books on the Middle East region.

We began the trip with a historical emphasis. We spent two days immersing ourselves in the history of major sites in Istanbul, the cultural center of Turkey. One of the most striking things I experienced was the mix of past and present, old and new. Images of the city are still clearly etched in my mind: Two blocks from the hotel was an incredible view; the Haghia Sophia, constructed as a Byzantine church in the 6th century was directly in front of me, behind me, the Blue Mosque built 1000 years later in the 16th century. Across the street was the Milon, a stone pilaster by which road distances were measured, and close by was the entrance to the Basilica Cistern. Beyond that, a row of restaurants selling kebabs and other delicious foods, and further down this road, street vendors and shops selling rugs, pillow covers, painted ceramics, and other crafts. Seagulls flew overhead and the smell of roasting chestnuts was in the air.

One of my favorite and surprising discoveries in Istanbul was the Basilica Cistern, which, according to my guidebook, was first constructed by Constantine and then expanded to its present size in the 6th century. Even though I had read about the cistern, a cavernous storage place for water, I had difficulty imagining what it would be like. After descending a flight of stairs, I passed row after row of marble columns, each column standing over 26 feet tall, supporting arch after arch. The space is larger than a football field and big enough to contain over 800,000 m3 of water! These 336 columns are mismatched, each one telling its own story, salvaged from older Hellenistic ruins, chosen and then recycled to provide stability to this amazing structure. At the back of the cistern two columns sit atop two different Medusa heads, one upside down, the other on its side; our guide suggested these heads were chosen because they were the perfect size to reuse as pedestals to extend the columns to the proper height.

The history and antiquity of Istanbul was palpable, and every time I turned around, I discovered a new juxtaposition of past and present, old and new. Ankara, our next and final destination, was a city in stark contrast to Istanbul. Located in the heart of the country, it is a governmental hub that grew from a small village to a large metropolis in less than 100 years. We spent the last two days of our trip exploring the old section of the city, visiting ancient sites, touring museums, and wandering through the streets. The middle days of our trip were spent on METU's campus; a green spot in the city.

We were greeted as guests of honor, attended lectures related to different aspects of Turkish life, shared meals and lively conversations with faculty and staff, and spent time meeting colleagues in sister departments. As a mathematics educator, one of the highlights of my time at the university was dialoging with colleagues. I experienced hospitality, as my colleague, Dr. Erdinc Cakiroglu, in mathematics education made me feel so welcome.

He showed me around two different elementary schools as well as the immediate area surrounding the university, answered my many questions and found an extra half-day in his schedule to allow for more time to exchange ideas. We not only shared common research interests and philosophical approaches to the teaching and learning of mathematics, but also faced similar challenges in modeling and promoting a more problem-solving approach to mathematics. Though the educational systems in Turkey and Michigan differ, (one big difference is the presence of a national mathematics school curriculum in Turkey), we face similar challenges in finding ways to provide ongoing and sustainable professional development and support for current mathematics teachers. I left METU feeling energized and excited by our shared vision and experiences.

The second phase of this international partnership delegation team was to host one or two colleagues from METU at GVSU the following academic year. PIC, in consultation with our team, invited Dr. Erdinc Cakiroglu to visit GVSU in the fall semester of 2009. This reciprocal exchange meant that I would have the opportunity to continue our conversations, identify potential areas for collaboration, and reciprocate the hospitality I had received when I was at METU. Erdinc arrived in mid September for a 5-day visit. The weather was still warm, the trees were just starting to turn colors, and it was the opening week of ArtPrize; Grand Rapids was alive with people and art and our campus looked beautiful. He spent his time meeting with colleagues in the Mathematics Department and in the wider university community, learned more about GVSU, shared his current research, and talked with students and colleagues about the teaching and learnng of mathematics in Turkey. By the end of his visit, we began to conceive of concrete ways to continue to foster ties between the two universities. We are in the planning stage of a collaborative research project, and I am hoping that I will have an opportunity to return to Ankara to teach a short course in the future.

Traveling to another country and university was energizing (after recovering from jet lag); I have new knowledge of Turkey and our partner university, and have expanded my circle of collegial relationships within the GVSU community. This exchange has also opened up new collaborative and scholarly opportunities for me personally. One of the primary goals of the delegation was to foster relationships between the universities at both ends of the exchange, and I would say this goal was definitely met. I am also hopeful that this experience is the beginning of continued dialog and exchange among the larger faculty and student bodies at METU and GVSU.

Maastricht: Preparing Future Teachers

Patricia Bloem & Laura Vander Broek, English

The Maas River slices through the center of town, separating the once-walled historic district of Vrijthof from the hip and trendy district of Wyck. An ancient arched bridge, a remnant of the Roman era, still spans the river, accommodating the bustling traffic of pedestrians and cyclists that pass from one side of the city to the other. Barges below ply the network of waterways--- ancient and vital arteries of transportation and commerce in this small, densely populated country. In the evenings, in the waning light of sunset, the silhouette of church spires against a red sky reminds the city of its strong religious past.

This is Maastricht—home to the PIC English Education Summer Study abroad program, a program that we have directed for the past three years. Situated in the southern Netherlands, Maastricht is tucked in a small pendant of land wedged between Belgium, directly to the west, and Germany, 15 kilometers to the east. By its very location and history, Maastricht is an international city where locals speak their own variety of Dutch, Meestrech, along with German and French and English. This rich array of languages provides an important backdrop for the program: GVSU students live and study where multilingualism is a fact of life and yet where English, the lingua franca, gives them ready access to Dutch life.

Our motivation to develop a program that targeted English education students was fueled by an important and compelling fact: future teachers at GVSU rarely study abroad, yet it is clear that these students' professional futures will put them in multicultural and multilinguistic classrooms. U.S. Census figures attest to this likelihood. Over the past three decades the number of Americans who speak a language other than English at home has increased more than 50%; today, that is 1 in 5 Americans. This linguistic diversity is mirrored in America's classrooms as well. School districts like Grand Rapids Public accommodate more than 6,000 children (1 in 4) for whom English is a second language from more than 50 different language backgrounds. And this school population – our English language learners— are most educationally at risk for school failure and dropping out.

We knew we wanted to develop a study abroad program that put our students in a new cultural and linguistic context – but we wanted more. We wanted our students inside primary and secondary school classrooms as well, where they could experience firsthand new school contexts with shared educational concerns about diversity. We wanted to provide our students access to schools where teachers faced comparable challenges – but did not necessarily use comparable solutions – to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students. We wanted, in the end, for our students to have experiences globally so that someday they could implement locally.

The past three years have affirmed the importance of these twin aims for our students: study abroad paired with field placements in linguistically rich school settings. To date we have established partnerships with three Dutch schools and are working to establish a fourth. Our partners include Joppenhof International Primary, a Dutch International primary school of 230 students

from more than 30 different language backgrounds; International School Maastricht (ISM), a Dutch international high school offering the International Baccalaureate to students from more than 30 different countries; and Porta Mosana, a competitive dual-language Dutch high school that offers academic content in English and Dutch as a means of preparing students for higher education in an English-medium context.

These schools offer our students unique exposures. Joppenhof Primary structures daily activities during "mother tongue time" to encourage development of students' mother tongues: time for children to speak in their home language to language peers, to write in their mother tongue, and to read from collections of children's literature in their mother tongue. "Thirty languages in this school," one of our GVSU students remarked, "and nine mother tongues in the classroom where I am working. I see every child learning English and having his or her needs met. Amazing!" At Porta Mosana, our students coach teens preparing for a school-wide public speech competition—oratory in the classical Greek style—judged by the mayor and other local officials. At ISM our students learn about the unique social and educational needs of Third Culture Kids, internationally mobile high schoolers, whose frequent moves from country to country challenge school adjustment.

Opportunities for our students to draw important comparisons to the U.S. context extend beyond the school walls. Contemporary Dutch society reflects recent and intense demographic change. Like much of the first world impacted by 20th century human migration, the Netherlands witnessed significant social change after WWII. Most defining was the immigration of large numbers of Moroccan and Turkish guest workers, Muslim in faith, who came to help fuel the thriving Dutch economy. Many of these workers made the Netherlands their home, and today, in a country of 16 million, people of Turkish and Moroccan descent number more than 1 million. A once homogeneous society rooted in Judeo-Christian values and practices now struggles in the 21st century to achieve social harmony. Controversy over the rights of cultural and linguistic minorities in civic and educational domains offers rich parallels to the U.S. context where English Only and anti-bilingualism policies continue to be hotly debated.

How does this study abroad experience impact our students? We have some preliminary but developing evidence that suggests our students are deeply impacted. Although many of our students have not yet graduated from GVSU, among the small group who have, we are impressed by their professional choices. One of our graduates has joined the Peace Corps and is teaching in Tonga. One is teaching English in Japan through the Japanese English Teaching (JET) program run by the Japanese Embassy. Another has taken a job teaching English in a large elementary school in Seoul, South Korea. And one—and this location is particularly delightful for us—is teaching at Joppenhof International Primary in Maastricht! We'd like to think that our students' experiences living and working in Maastricht have prepared them well and have given them a new vision for what they can do with their teaching lives.

A Terrible Journey

Kippe Loki, International Relations

I was born on April 7, 1984, in the village of Chukudum in southern Sudan, as the last son of Maurice and Alfonsa Loki. Chukudum was a beautiful town surrounded by mountains and our family lived on a farm. My father was a high school principal, while my mother stayed home to care for our house and the rest of her children. I was ten years old, but I had not started school yet because I was helping my uncle take care of his cattle. Everything changed when the civil war broke out. This civil war was between the northerners (Muslims) and southerners (Christians). The Muslims wanted the Christians to abandon their faith and practice the Islamic religion and its Sharia law. This is law based directly on the Koran. In addition to this, the northerners also controlled all of the natural resources (oil) and the development of the country, which left the entire region of the southern Sudan without any good infrastructure. Following the outbreak of the civil war in Sudan, my father was captured by the rebels and was forced to leave Sudan and head to Ethiopia to be trained as a soldier. Later he died of a sickness when the rebel group, Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) was kicked out of Ethiopia.

The death of my father had me going through a lot of ups and downs, not only because I was missing my mother and my sisters and brothers without knowing where they were, but also because I had now lost the most important person in our family. I was so upset about my father's death because I did not get a chance to spend time with him to fulfill the father and son relationship since the war sent us to different places and now he was dead. The death of my father left me with no advice or final words that a son is supposed to receive from his dad before he dies. In our culture, it is considered important to listen to your father's last words.

So my father was gone and my sisters, brothers, and I were left with only our mom. A few days after the departure of my father, a terrible war took control of our town and that was when everything went wrong. Our town of Chukudum was destroyed. Everybody ran in separate directions. When the people who were heading in the same direction as I arrived at a safe location, everybody was crying except for the few older men who were with us. I looked around to see if I could see one of my family members in the group. I could not even identify one. So I sat down to listen to what the older men were saying about the situation.

There were more than fifty of us. One of the older men stood up and said that since there were many little children without their parents, it was the older men's responsibility to care and to provide for these children instead of leaving them to die. Some of the children who were not able to walk long distances by themselves were being carried by the older men on their backs as we started walking to the neighboring country of Kenya. By now, there was no food or water to drink and many of the children and adults died on the way. There were no clear roads to walk on, so we walked through the bushes and shrubs and tall grasses. Many others lost their lives as a result of wild animals like lions that were eating people who fell behind the rest. I saw two children pushed down by lions and eaten. We could do nothing to stop these attacks, as we had no weapons. Other nomadic pastoralist tribes were also killing people out of fear that we might want to steal from them. Primarily, we walked at nighttime because the older people believed that walking at night was less dangerous. This way, the enemies could not see us from a very far distance.

As soon as we arrived at the border, the Kenyan police took us to the police station and immediately instructed their government headquarters to contact the United Nations. About fifty of us stayed in the police station for one week but the adults left because they insisted on going back to Chukudum to check on the situation and the people who were left in the mountains. During that time, the Kenyan government in Nairobi waited for the United Nations' response. Although the police provided us with food and water, still the conditions at the police station were not as good as we thought they were going to be. By this time the United Nations was still somehow negotiating with the Kenyan government to see if they were going to be allowed to establish a refugee camp for Sudanese in Kenya.

At the establishment of the refugee camp, the United Nations came up with the rescue plan that they would send the children

from Sudan (Lost Boys and Lost Girls) to the United States. The United Nations gave us forms to fill out and held interviews with the United Nations lawyers who then either passed or failed us. If a person failed, they could appeal and be granted a second interview. These interviews were done to make sure that one was telling the truth and was really a Sudanese who had lost his parents or her family members. This had to be done because some people from other African countries would come to the camp just to find a way of coming to the United States as a refugee.

I passed the first interview and I was then sent to the doctor for a medical check-up in order to qualify to come to America. If my medical results were not good, I would have been rejected then. In addition, I also had to take orientation classes to learn about the United States. The lost boys and girls were divided into two groups, minors and majors, depending on age. Even though some of the lost boys and girls knew their ages, the United Nations in most cases did not recognize that and gave everybody the first of January as their birth dates. I was told that the reason for this was to make the paperwork easy.

After attending the interviews and passing my medical check-up I was finally resettled here in Michigan in 2000. I did not choose to come to this state but it was picked out for me by the United Nations officials who were doing the paper work. Back then, I did not have any information about the United States because if I had known how cold Michigan was, maybe I could have asked them to take me somewhere warm. After all, the average daytime temperature year-round in Sudan is 80 F. Upon my departure, I did not know who I would be staying with. When the plane landed at Lansing Capital City airport, I met a lady named Diane who would be my caseworker, and a Sudanese guy named Francis who happened to have known my real family back in Sudan and knew my new host family here. This family took me to their home and they became my foster parents.

The Walsh family had two small lovely children and they were very welcoming and nice people. I stayed with them for a year and then with another family until I graduated from high school. After my high school graduation I moved with two other Sudanese boys into a three- bedroom apartment in Lansing. The other guys and I are still in contact with our foster parents and we celebrate all the holidays together as one family. All of us went to Lansing Community College where we ran track and played soccer. As I was attending LCC, a lot of Division One and Division Two schools recruited me to run track for them, but I decided not to because I would not have time to work. I needed to earn some money to support myself and my family members back in the refugee camp.

Sometimes I feel bad about not pursuing track in college because maybe it would have been an opportunity for me to go to the Olympics. When I watched the opening ceremony of the Olympics in Beijing, China, I saw that my friend Lopez Lomong, who I had stayed with in Nairobi, was chosen by team U.S.A to carry the flag. This is the dilemma sometimes faced by refugees: new opportunities arise, but we have obligations to our families and friends left behind.

Overall, civil wars in many African countries have sent a lot of refugees to all four corners of the world. I am one of those people. After staying here in the United States for a while I was able to find out where my mom, sisters and brothers were. They had all survived! I was able to return to Sudan last December and reunite with my family and relatives. They all cried tears of joy when they saw me despite the fact that some could not even recognize me. I did not have enough time to spend with them because I had to come back quickly to resume winter classes.

I always pray to God that after my graduation, my education will help me find a job with one of the organizations based here that is working in Sudan so that I can be close to my family. If there were no available jobs, I would go back to school again for a master's degree and then I would be even closer to fulfilling my dreams. One day if I make it, I would like to be in a position where I would be able to give back to my community and to the children who might be going through the same series of events that I went through as a young boy.

The Making of "A Terrible Journey"

Margery Guest, English

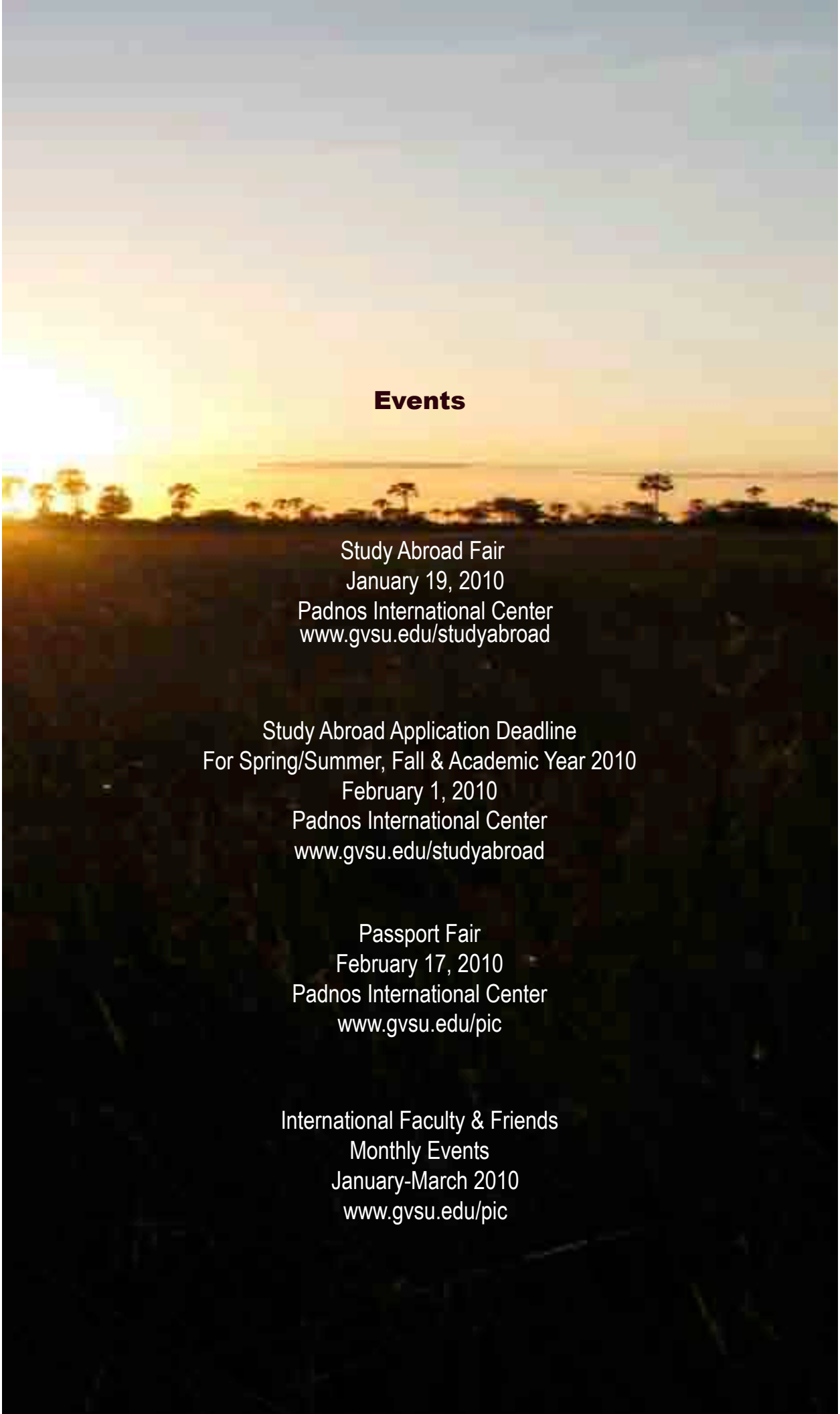
Kippe Loki's story of escaping from war-torn Sudan to a refugee camp in Kenya and later to the United States is familiar to those who have heard about the Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan. But for people living in the comfort and safety of the first world, reading a first-hand account of this nightmare forces us to face how some children must grow up in this world. Kippe is a man now, but he was cheated of a safe and secure childhood with his parents and family because of the war in his country. His story is horrifying and sad, yet true, and all the more powerful for being told in his voice.

I knew Kippe Loki by his Christian name, Dominic Maurice. He was a student in my Writing 305 class during spring semester of 2009. There he wrote this essay in a slightly different form for an assignment. Dom's story seemed to illustrate the worst deeds of humankind, yet at the same time, it demonstrated the strength and hope of the Sudanese children and the dedication of the village men guiding the children to safety. I hoped the piece could gain a wider audience.

My task was to help Dom with his essay. But the task of any editor or writing teacher is more difficult when the writer's story is painful and recalling the memories may cause renewed suffering. My challenge was to encourage honesty in Dom's piece while being sensitive to the pain it might cause him to write it.

How does a teacher help a fledgling writer convey such obscenities as people shooting at small children as they run for their lives? Or such horrors as lions selecting a vulnerable child and pushing her down in order to kill and eat her? Dom already had shown a great deal of courage by telling his story to his fellow students. Since his story was so hard to imagine in the safety of an American classroom, would they even take it seriously? As his teacher, I wanted Dom's piece to be as strong as possible; I sometimes pushed him to provide details in order to make his audience understand. For example, he had written, "Some children lost their lives because of wild animals in the bush." From this, the reader may vaguely understand that wild animals killed children, but they're unlikely to experience the visceral horror of Dom's experience because the language is removed and passive. Yet by encouraging Dom to describe what he saw, I was, in effect, saying: "Relive this in all its horror so your reader can grasp your experience." It can sometimes feel exploitive and even cruel. To his credit, Dom was willing to do the hard work of revising his piece. In this case, he added the sentence, "I saw two children pushed down by lions and eaten."

Was writing this piece worth reliving such awful experiences for Dom? Only he can say. As his teacher, I hope that writing this story has been a positive experience overall. I hope he knows that he has performed a service by bringing readers closer to the journey of the Sudanese Lost Boys and Girls. That is the gift the writer gives and it doesn't come cheaply.



Events

Study Abroad Fair
January 19, 2010
Padnos International Center
www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad

Study Abroad Application Deadline
For Spring/Summer, Fall & Academic Year 2010
February 1, 2010
Padnos International Center
www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad

Passport Fair
February 17, 2010
Padnos International Center
www.gvsu.edu/pic

International Faculty & Friends
Monthly Events
January-March 2010
www.gvsu.edu/pic

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

Global Connections is printed bi-annually by the Padnos International Center and Area Studies, members of the College of Interdisciplinary Studies at Grand Valley State University. The opinions expressed by Global Connections contributors do not necessarily represent the opinions of Global Connections, the Padnos International Center or Area Studies. This newsletter was produced using environmentally-friendly linseed oil-based ink and paper containing 50% post-consumer fiber. If you would like to access Global Connections via internet, please visit www.gvsu.edu/pic.

PADNOS INTERNATIONAL CENTER

The mission of the Padnos International Center is to engage the community of Grand Valley State University in meaningful international experiences which foster an appreciation and awareness of diverse cultures, people, and ideas.

PHOTOS

Photos included in this publication were submitted by: Esther Billings, Patricia Bloem, Claudia Carrera, Kylie Cherpes, Jacob Deerfield, Alex Delamar, Laura Vanderbroek, and Peter Wampler.

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SUBMISSIONS

The bulk of Global Connections content is unsolicited. We continually seek content for publication. Submissions can be sent via email smithliz@gvsu.edu. Submissions are due June 1 for the Fall semester edition and October 1 for the Winter semester edition.

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES