



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE  
WYE SEMINARS



## 30th ANNIVERSARY ESSAYS

### Introduction

In 2013, the Aspen Institute/Wye Seminars celebrated 30 years of seminars. Faculty seminars have been held since 1983; Dean seminars have been held since 2007. Over those 30 years, there have been upwards of 1,000 participants. In order to mark the 30th anniversary of these seminars, the Wye Seminars Advisory Council decided to solicit brief reflective essays from participants, ranging from remembrances of the seminars and reflections on specific readings to assessments of the value of the seminars in participants' personal and professional growth. Eighteen submissions were received thus far, and we have printed them below.

David Rehm

Provost

Mount St. Mary's University

Member, Wye Academic Programs Advisory Council

## Wye Faculty Seminar

By David Townsend, PhD, JD\*

For 30 years, the Wye Faculty Seminar, cosponsored by the Aspen Institute and the Association of American Colleges and Universities, has enabled college and university faculty from all disciplines to relate their teaching to broad issues of citizenship in American society and the global polity. Over 1000 faculty members have been nominated by their institutions and have joined us on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. Several participants have repeated the seminars over the years, some faculty returning as administrators.

The Seminar addresses a compelling need of college teachers: to probe fundamental questions of civic engagement across disciplines, centuries, and cultures. The Seminar serves to empower faculty to play a more central role in the intellectual community on their home campuses and to exercise the strong sort of leadership that comes from a deeper, more reflective grasp of fundamental values.

Using classical and contemporary texts and led by highly skilled moderators, participants in the Wye Faculty Seminar focus on issues such as individual rights and responsibilities; the public purposes of education in a free society, the goals of a democratic republic, the virtues of freedom and equality, and the nature of a good society. These issues are examined in the context of global challenges in an emerging global society beset by rapid economic, technological, political, and social change and serious environmental upheavals.

Through a free discussion of classical writings by authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, John Winthrop, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, David Walker, Susan B. Anthony, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass,

John Dewey, and Martin Luther King participants examine the fundamental attitudes and ideas about human nature and society. Through discussion of modern texts by authors such as Tillie Olsen, Martha Nussbaum, Martin Wolf, Aung San Suu Kyi, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Mary Midgely, Amartya Sen, Edward O. Wilson, Edward Said, Samuel Huntington, Constance Buchanan, Ella Baker, Lee Kuan Yew, Richard Rubenstein, Robert Bellah, Ralph Ellison, Studs Terkel, and Vine Deloria participants confront the profound and interdependent issues of our own time.

Wye Faculty Seminar participants report that as a result of the Seminar they are better equipped to teach effectively and to build relationships with colleagues, students, and communities that are meaningful and supportive. As teachers and leaders, they are more confident in their ability to participate in the type of discussion that offers guidance, especially in turbulent economic and social environments.

Participants in Wye Faculty Seminars are nominated, sponsored, and generally funded by their Chief Academic Officers or Presidents of the colleges they serve. In addition to the Wye Faculty Seminar, there is now an annual Wye Deans Seminar and periodic Wye Seminars for Presidents. Many participants have testified that Wye Seminars are life-changing experiences.

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## The 2001 Wye Deans Seminar

By Kristine Bartanen, PhD\*

In July 2001, the Aspen Institute tried a noble, short-lived experiment by inviting Deans of Student Affairs to participate concurrently with faculty members in a “Student Citizenship in the College Community” seminar at Wye River. As one of fourteen deans of students in this inaugural group (with the perspective in 2001 of having come to student affairs from the faculty, and with the perspective in 2013 of having returned to “the other side” as a chief academic officer), the seminar was – and remains – a provocative, powerful and aspirational professional development experience.

In a period in which, on many of our campuses, visions for strengthening the academic-residential (or academic/co-curricular) dimensions of student learning were beginning to gain hold, a striking – and ultimately quite provocative – component of the 2001 event was that the faculty and student affairs seminarists met and were housed separately, with four dinners in common over the week. This “divide” surprised some of us, given the importance of collaborative creation of citizenship that is essential for campus communities. Granted, meeting separately allowed space for heartfelt narratives, occasional rants, and uplifting humor about the challenges of “second-class citizenship” felt (to various degrees, at various times) among student affairs professionals relative to college faculties. Some faculty seminarists asked deans, “What are you reading?” as if the Aspen curriculum would somehow need to be different, or less challenging, for us. The capstone production of “Antigone” proved to serve as metaphor for our common challenge: communication mishaps regarding what we understood to be a *joint* production of the canonical drama resulted in the faculty seminarists having chosen all

the scenes and roles, with the student affairs colleagues left to negotiate for parts and participation, and the two groups luckily brought together through the skills of a talented director-leader to create a tellingly enjoyable ensemble performance. “Antigone” became synecdoche among the student affairs deans as we returned to our home campuses to observe divides, to work through challenges of being brought late to decision-making tables, and to share experiences of collaborative achievement in the months that followed. We continue to understand cryptic email messages which say: “Antigone visited my campus today.”

That said, the seminar readings, films, discussions and drama were powerful. As I review my now dozen-year-old notes, I am struck by how timely our observations and questions remain: What independences are our students declaring? How do they hear what college leadership is declaring? What are the threads of stewardship in our leadership? How do we maintain our individual voices while serving as institutional leaders? We worried about the efficacy of the Constitution in light of new forms of communication; while “netiquette” for chat rooms and surprises of dailyjolt.com have been superseded by newer generations of social media, questions about interpersonal conflict resolution in faceless interactions, response to electronic forms of hate speech, and institutional identity in an open access age persist. How do we create campus commonwealths? How has University of Phoenix forced liberal arts colleges to define and cogently express who we are and why our missions are vital? How are we assessing and articulating the benefits of self-governing, living-learning communities? We struggled with how to keep students and faculty members engaged in the democratic processes of our campuses. We talked openly about how to forward questions of diversity in the face of institutional racism, with concern that if we could not inspire insight and action within colleges and universities then how could such discussions and reforms ever occur in broader venues. We benefited from the social diversity of participants around the Houghton House table, wise voices who raised questions such as: Where is feminism on the campus? What is a female patriot? How do we address – as a social issue, not merely an individual struggle – the heartbreak that the second largest cause of adolescent death is suicide, and that sexual identity is a

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major factor in that lonely truth? What is the fear deeper than offending someone different from ourselves, the fear of the heart of darkness within us that denies racism or white privilege? We wrestled with how to help students vividly imagine the different, to more effectively move them from spectators to participants, to engage their partnership in achieving social justice, to help them find their callings even as we continue to find our own.

“Student Citizenship in the College Community” remains an aspirational touchstone in many respects. I returned home in July 2001 with hopes of finding the time and space to teach a first-year seminar course on the citizenship theme; my particular target audience would be (the verb tense is revealing) those first-year transfer students who join the campus in January when so many friendship groups and interaction patterns are already well-established. In these reflections, I am reminded of the warmth of collegiality shared in occasional meetings-up with some of the deans-seminarians, even as some of the wise questions they posed continue to be less than fully answered: Can you articulate why your campus would be a good community for a student of color? How do we educate for 75 years in the future? In re-reading my notes, I find reminders to bring into creation of a leadership cohort program that my academic and student affairs colleagues are working on at present. While the book and film list on the final page in my folder is not yet fully read or viewed, even in brief annotations there I find ideas for the Martin Luther King, Jr. remarks I need to prepare in the coming days. While I have the good fortune to be an academic dean who has been both a dean of students and a faculty member, and to be part of a legacy of ensemble in producing the academic-residential community of my campus, I am still motivated to a new year’s resolution to insure that student affairs professionals have timely and considered voices at deliberative tables. I aspire to continue to achieve goals that the Wye seminar powerfully provoked.

## Inspired by the Wye River Seminar

By Mohamed S. Camara, PhD\*

In the summer of 2011, I had the good fortune of participating in the Aspen Institute’s Wye River Seminar. The experience of that academic gathering has impacted my professional outlook in a variety of ways and I address one of them in the present essay. Inspired by the readings on and discussion of the topic “Citizenship in the American and Global Polity,” I recently develop a 400-level Humanities undergraduate seminar around the topic “What Is a Free Society?”

The course is designed to examine the question from the triple perspective of Political Philosophy, Ethics, and Political History. Second-order questions embedded within this enduring question include the following: Is there such a thing as absolute freedom or does freedom owe its quintessence to some inherent relativity? Are justice and freedom synonymous with one another or are they alternately one another’s cause and effect? What is the value of individual freedom in a communitarian society and what is the value of collective freedom in an individualistic society? Can separation of religion and government be meaningful without dialectic equilibrium between freedom of religion and freedom from religion? Can a nation be a free society while oppressing another? Are “universal human rights” universal by the necessity of their own nature or do they acquire meaning only when considered from the standpoint of each culture to which they are to be applied? In other words, how to balance moral universalism and cultural relativism in our globalizing world?

In addressing these questions the course reflects intellectual pluralism and balance in that it explores the philosophical conceptualization of “freedom” and “free society” both in Western and non-Western

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traditions. It scrutinizes the formulation of normative values and their incorporation into the moral, legal, and political doctrines that have underpinned Western and non-Western civilizations, respectively. Furthermore, the course explores the ways in which the multifaceted historical encounters and interactions of these civilizations generated Universalist principles of freedom and liberty. Additionally, it examines the extent to which Western and non-Western civilizations agree upon particular aspects of those principles within such frameworks of global governance as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the possible causes of their disagreements upon others.

The intellectual rationale of the course rests upon the fact that throughout recorded history freedom has meant different things to different contemporaneous societies and, in many cases, to the same society at different epochs of its history. No civilization has had a monopoly over the ideas of “liberty,” “equality,” and “justice,” all of which are central to the notions of “freedom” and “free society,” even though self-righteousness causes each to self-proclaim the champion of them. The course addresses the fact that from ancient times to the present these noble ideas have been claimed and proclaimed by theologians, philosophers, and politicians alike. That includes in societies as different as Imperial Rome and Democratic Greece; as Ancient Egypt and Islamic Arabia; as Revolutionary France and Apartheid-ruled South Africa; and as Capitalist America and Communist Russia. The course demonstrates that what have greatly differed throughout that long history are the ways in which each culture endeavored to implement its interpretation of the noble ideas under consideration.

The course is structured in four units, each exploring a core theoretical system that epitomizes the dominant philosophical approach to freedom for the corresponding historical period or periods. In Unit One, “Freedom and the Divine: Ancient and Medieval Perspectives,” a comparative scrutiny is done of the ways in which different major world systems of socio-religious beliefs envisaged freedom from ancient times through the sixteenth century C.E. With the works of thinkers such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas this unit incorporates a study of the

theory of natural law and explores the notion that humans are naturally endowed with the right to be free and that society has the divine-ordained ethical obligation to uphold these rights such that individuals will lead a life of moral goodness, which, in turn will enable nations to be free societies. For reasons of methodological efficacy and historical accuracy, the systems are grouped into the following sub-units: Hindu and Confucian Traditions; Jewish Tradition; Christian Tradition; Islamic Tradition; and African Traditions. The comparative study is informed by these works: Aquinas *Political Writings*, edited by R. W. Dyson; *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi; *The Hindu Tradition*, edited by Ainslie T. Embree, as well as the writings of African thinkers, such as Kwame Gyekye, dealing with African indigenous views on freedom, justice, and duty.

In Unit Two, “Enlightened Freedom as a Rational and Humanistic Aspiration,” the focus is on the reconceptualization of freedom during the era of Western Renaissance and Enlightenment. The discussion considers the impact of the emerging primacy of cognitive rationalism over religious dogma and that of moral humanism emphasizing free will over preordained norms as the guiding light for individual responsibility and collective duty. Here the debate revolves around ground-breaking works such as Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government*, Immanuel Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *The Social Contract*. The discussion in this unit scrutinizes the importance accorded to the notion of moral propriety as a reciprocal behavior among the citizen, society, and the state as expounded in Immanuel Kant’s theory of categorical imperative and John Stuart Mill’s preoccupation with “the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual.” In Unit Three, “Freedom, Justice and Equality: A Contemporary Perspective,” the course examines the dialectical interdependence of freedom, justice and equality, as theorized by selected contemporary political philosophers. Thus, the discussion here is primarily informed by Robert E. Gooding and Philip Pettit’s insightful anthology, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, to be complemented by John Dewey’s *Freedom and Culture*; John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*; Andrew R. Cecil’s *The Foundations of a*

*Free Society*; and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*.

Lastly, in Unit Four, "Toward Globalization of Ethics?" the course deliberates on the ongoing debate relative to the idea that contemporary globalization has been implicitly strengthening moral universalism and challenging cultural relativism. The course explores morality and universality in Jewish thought with Michael Waltzer, globalization and Christian ethics with Max Stackhouse, Buddhism and the globalization of ethics with Peter Nosco, Muslim perspectives on global ethics with Muhammad Khalid Masud, and Confucian perspectives on ethical uniformity and diversity with Richard Madsen. It also examines Mark Murphy's notion of natural law and common morality and Kimberly Hutchings' feminist perspectives on a planetary ethic.

## **Becoming Lucid, Knowing Wye: The Impact of the Wye Seminar on Two Colleagues and a First-Year Seminar at Lesley University**

By Liv Cummins  
and  
Bryan Brophy-Baermann, PhD\*

As a theater artist, I'm used to collaborating: I love talking through ideas with others, working toward a shared goal, creating something new from more than one perspective. But in my teaching, I have felt isolated: faculty, for the most part, plan courses alone, teach alone, and remain primarily ensconced within their discipline. There's no structure for co-teaching in place, at least not at Lesley University. Beyond that, most faculty are far too busy to sit down and have a conversation, much less work on a course together. They want to – faculty respect and like one another tremendously – but it just doesn't happen often.

Despite this and other challenges, a new collaborative initiative is being born at Lesley: the Lesley University Core Interdisciplinary Seminar, or LUCID Seminar, draws on the expertise of a team of faculty across disciplines, exploring one "big" idea through many contexts and myriad texts, including classic and contemporary books and essays; fiction; poetry; and visual "texts," including film and photography. LUCID's mission is to engage first-year students and faculty in collaborative learning and critical inquiry of challenging questions about ourselves and our world.

My colleague, Bryan Brophy-Baermann, Asst. Prof. of Political Science, and I are co- Coordinators of LUCID. We come from vastly different areas of study and had never had a "real" conversation until given

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the chance to do so at the Wye Seminar in 2011. Now, everything has changed: now, we are becoming LUCID.

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In July 2011, I was coming off a disappointing year as Lesley's Core Curriculum Committee Chair. Some veteran faculty opposed curriculum changes, making free exchange of ideas difficult. Being new to Lesley, and to life in academia, I believed the university was THE place for honest dialogue among open-minded people. Soon I began to dread conflict-filled faculty meetings. When I submitted our committee's final report of recommendations – which included an interdisciplinary, team-taught, First-Year Seminar –, I didn't believe they would come to fruition. So, that July, I didn't know what to expect from Wye, but I hoped it would be a place full of interesting people, and that I would come away feeling renewed.

During my frustrating year heading the Core Curriculum Committee, Bryan was in his first year at Lesley, getting acclimated. He saw the call for applications to the Wye Seminar: "A week exploring the notions of liberal arts education 'today' intrigued me," he says. "As shifts in culture, advances in technology, and economic exigencies pressure us to rethink how we approach the meaning and usefulness of higher education, we are often playing 'catch-up,' reacting to what we believe is going on with our students. It is rare that faculty have the opportunity to sit with peers to probe the vital 'what?' and 'why?' questions of education," he explains. We both hoped that Wye would provide a free exchange of ideas. We were not disappointed.

At Wye, what struck me was my section's group dynamic and diversity, with faculty from across the country, the world, representing a range of disciplines, including nursing, philosophy, history, political science, meteorology, international business, and teacher education, among others. The breadth of backgrounds and expertise in the room helped us consider texts and ideas from myriad perspectives, with no one person dominating. Joanna Tobin, our able moderator, made sure all voices were heard; we were encouraged from the get-go to "Park {our} expertise and

egos at the door." But in practice our group seemed to take this advice further with a silent commitment to treating the texts, one another, and our time together with great care and even dignity. (Apparently, we took Confucius, an early reading, to heart!) We also had plenty of laughs. I have never been a part of such a thoughtful group where we could passionately disagree, listen to argument, and come to a new understanding while maintaining our respect and humor. Here were educators in true collaboration, renewing my hope for more productive interaction among faculty at my university.

Bryan found diverse opinions in his section as well, and he saw some patterns: "On one axis, I saw the more realist/empirical perspectives from the economist, the political scientists and the historians versus the more idealist/literary perspectives on the other. The first group looked at the facts of a document; the second group was more likely to read between the lines and interpret the deeper meanings. On a second axis, I saw the pessimists versus optimists. These groups often overlapped with the first pair, respectively, but not completely: there were optimistic empiricists and pessimistic literary theorists. This wide range of perspectives really opened my eyes to just how malleable meaning can be," he writes.

What resonated most with Bryan, though, was "playing the role of student again. It has been a long time since I have been, literally, in the chair of a student: not knowing what the moderator is going to ask, not knowing what my colleagues are going to say or how to respond without my 'expertise,' feeling the pressure of being adequately prepared, being a bit nervous about airing my thoughts among a group of people I didn't know well. All these unknowns made me realize how intimidating a rigorous, discussion-oriented, seminar class can be. This has led me to be a bit more forgiving, less intense, more supportive, and less controlling in the classroom."

At Lesley that fall, discussions recommenced around a recommendation of our Core Curriculum Committee: an interdisciplinary, team-taught First-Year Seminar. Two colleagues and I – each from different disciplines – created a course: *Contemplating Courage*. Team-teaching was hard work, but enriching. Ironically, it seemed what we were teach-

ing our students – courage – was what we needed to practice ourselves to teach this course: to step into uncertainty to allow growth to take place. Being outside our disciplines, we relied on each others' instincts and ideas rather than our own. It was exciting and inspiring for us and, more importantly, our students. I realized that constructive exchange of ideas among faculty could happen – not only in an ideal setting like Wye, but at my university.

Bryan followed the development of the Courage course and the possibilities of a first year seminar “from a bit of a distance,” he explains. “Most discussions on these weighty subjects get side-tracked into predictable conflicts in our school meetings. I knew that the only things that were going to get done were the things that a core group of committed people were willing to do, to sacrifice for.”

I asked a few faculty to start sharing ideas about a First-Year Seminar. What did we learn from the Courage course? What were other schools doing? Bryan got involved, and we developed a strong connection, surprisingly, perhaps, because of our distinct academic backgrounds. For him, “the Wye experience broke down the wall between the fine arts and the social sciences that I had imagined, if not actually seen, all my life. I would never have predicted that the richest discussions I would have in the eighteen months following Wye about teaching and the world around us would be with a theater professor. How interesting and how fun! This “real life” experience solidified the practice I had at Wye, and reaffirmed for me that I needed to think differently about facilitating learning in my courses.”

Interdisciplinary thinking and learning, “Big” ideas, even what it means to be an “educated person” – this was what I'd always thought it meant to live a life in higher education. We were becoming a community of learners, as we'd been at Wye. I didn't realize until now how much I'd missed collaboration in my teaching, or, more importantly, how vital it seemed. Bryan, too, saw the significance of being part of “a large group of faculty from across the college, talking about the importance of teaching—and how we challenge ourselves to be better.”

The Lesley University Core InterDisciplinary Seminar, or LUCID Seminar, was born, a cross- University program. Drawing on a diverse group of faculty from all areas of study, LUCID – one course with eighteen

sections – is unified by common Learning Outcomes, assignments, and large-group, team-taught plenary sessions. At Wye, we were teachers and learners, from many backgrounds, interrogating global issues of our time as well as timeless questions of ourselves.

If the LUCID Seminar looks anything like Wye, we're on the right track.

## Citizenship in the American and Global Polity: Wye Faculty Seminar at the Aspen Institute

By Andrew Darien, PhD\*

“I mean that they remain in the upper world: but this must not be allowed; they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the den, and partake of their labors and honors, whether they are worth having or not.”

--Plato, “The Allegory of the Cave,” *The Republic*, Book VII

I often think with great reverence about Salem State College as a people’s institution. One of the college’s most distinguishing features is its ethic of openness, democratic opportunity, and student support. Although Salem State students generally do not come from privilege, teaching here feels like a privilege. Every semester I am blown away by the life stories of students who overcome herculean financial, social, familial, and personal hurdles to pursue higher education. Our history majors are especially impressive, seeking education not as a mere utilitarian vocational exercise, but to fulfill an intellectual curiosity about the past and the human condition. I am heartened by, and remain deeply committed to, the college’s self-identified mission to “provide a high quality, student-centered education that prepares a diverse community of learners to contribute responsibly and creatively to a global society, and serve as a resource to advance the region’s cultural, social, and economic development.”

Teaching at a people’s institution in the Commonwealth, however, means paltry resources, crumbling facilities, subpar technology, and limited administrative support. Our students already endure the pressures of attending school full-time while shouldering heavy work and

family obligations. Many become lost without proper administrative and financial support. Massachusetts state colleges and universities remain at the mercy of the state budget, pleading for resources like a dependent and neglected child. Education should be the great leveler of privilege and the gateway to good citizenship. And yet, as my colleague Brad Austin so often reminds me, we work at a public college in a state that values private education.

Faculty at Salem State find themselves inundated with responsibilities, scrambling to juggle a heavy teaching load, advisement, committee work, community outreach, and scholarship. The demands of the semester, for both student and faculty, are so great that it is easy to lose sight of the higher purpose in which we are engaged. There are times when I feel as if I am more of a worker of the college than an historian, academic, educator, or intellectual. Teaching can be inordinately gratifying, but there are moments in which my mind, body, and spirit ache for nourishment, a reminder of what I loved a being a student and why I became a history professor. I never aspired to live in an ivory tower, but visiting one every now and then has its virtues.

In 2010 I had the honor of being one of twenty-five national faculty members elected to participate in the Wye Faculty Seminar at the picturesque estate of the Aspen Institute located on Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay. The seminar consisted of a week-long series of facilitated discussions drawing on primary texts from antiquity to the present, both western and global. For one week we roamed the classic works of literature, philosophy, and history, and debated their meaning from our own disciplinary and political perspectives. Our focus was on citizenship in the American and global polity, examining texts from Machiavelli to Madison, Socrates to Said, Confucius to King.

The seminar challenged us to question some of our fundamental assumptions in our personal philosophy, politics, and pedagogy. How have the world’s greatest thinkers conceived of our responsibilities as citizens? What is good government? What is the essence of human nature? How do we create the conditions which can bring out the best in humanity? We discussed the many dimensions of the texts, the tensions within them, and the implications of them for our own day. This was just my

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kind of academic meal. Some of my friends joked that I was going to nerd camp. For me, it was intellectual nirvana, a spa for the mind.

It had been ten years, dating back to my doctoral work at New York University, since I had engaged in this kind of deep contemplation and uninterrupted dialogue with fellow academics. The seminar reminded me of my early days at NYU in which my fellow graduate students and I, free from responsibility, had the privilege of fellowships that afforded us the opportunity to study history as a full-time endeavor. In addition to structured class seminars, our conversations spilled out into bars, coffee shops, and diners. But even that experience was not without its perils. So much of graduate school was filled with anxiety about one's status in the program, doubting of one's intellectual heft, posturing relative to one's peers, and constant worrying about the absolutely brutal academic job market.

The beauty of the Aspen Institute was that its sole objective was contemplation, which liberated the participants from professional and academic agendas. My cohorts were seasoned and accomplished faculty from a multitude of disciplines and institutions, secure enough in their careers to check their egos at the door. For one week we could forget about our teaching, research, and administrative commitments and simply contemplate ideas. This was a genuine community of scholars sharpening their skills of cooperative conversation and collective intellectual engagement. Each morning we would spend four hours discussing five or six readings common readings related to citizenship. How fascinating it was to listen to a criminologist make sense of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, a military historian riff on Thucydides *Peloponnesian War*, or a religion scholar interpret David Walker's *Appeal*.

The Aspen Institute encourages scholars to nurture their bodies and spirit as well as their minds. Each morning's seminar was followed by quiet time for reading and reflection. Our afternoons were free for swimming, biking, walking, running, or canoeing. The Wye River complex is a stately setting along the Eastern shore of Maryland, surrounded by wooded preserves, green pastures, and bucolic farms. The Institute housed us in comfortable rustic cabins, treated us to gourmet cuisine, and encouraged us to gather socially for each evening's cocktail hour.

How pleasantly removed this was from using my Clipper Card to purchase an angry Chartwells sandwich to be frenetically consumed at my desk in the brief respite between classes and meetings. My Aspen evenings were in stark contrast to the usual fare of cooking dinner, bathing my children, reading *Harry Potter*, and then providing menacing glares at the boys as they come out of their rooms with impish grins in multiple infractions of the bedtime curfew. This was an escape to be cherished. One could not but help fantasize about what it might be to live with permanent pampering. It is a guilty pleasure to imagine living like a Greek philosopher, supported to inhabit in the world of ideas.

As an avid runner, I was especially appreciative to sort out my thoughts while frolicking along the country roads. I always do my best thinking while my body is on automatic pilot and toxins are spilling out of my pores. As an urban resident, I felt particularly fortunate to be at Aspen where I could glide through the placid country landscape. It was quite easy, for a time, to forget the demands of teaching, researching, advising, administration, and other responsibilities. But reality has a way of intruding upon one's bliss. After a while it was difficult to ignore the fantasy of our existence.

Following an especially long run in the afternoon of my third day at the Aspen Institute I sat doubled over in gleeful exhaustion on the steps of the Wye House. As I got up and turned to take in the stunning Georgian and Federal Architecture of this U.S. National Historic Landmark, it suddenly dawned on me that I was residing at a former plantation. The gorgeous estate upon which we were so privileged to stay had been built on the backs of slave labor. During its peak, I would later learn, the plantation surrounding the house encompassed forty-thousand acres and was home to more than a thousand slaves. The property is still owned by the descendants of its original owner, Edward Lloyd. Frederick Douglass spent a few years of his life on the plantation, and would later write in his autobiography of the brutal conditions there. To make matters more uncomfortable, many of the current service workers at the Aspen Institute were deferential and "respectable" African-Americans under a predominantly white management.

How ironic that our seminar had just read an excerpt from Douglass's

“Do Not Forget Truth and Justice,” in which he challenged his fellow citizens to lend purpose and dignity to the violent horror of the Civil War. Douglass questioned the half-measures of his white brethren in the Union Army who fought for emancipation but fell short of delivering full citizenship to black Americans. “They are good as far as they go, but alas! How far short they stop!” noted Douglass. “They are blind powers, they can destroy but they cannot build up. They can overcome, conquer, and subdue the organized physical force of the rebels, but can they reform the national heart, quicken the national conscience, root out our wicked prejudices, abolish evil practices, and destroy the great moral evils which have filled our goodly land with blood and terror?” While the Eastern Shore of Maryland is not quite the racial caste system it was in Douglass’s time, his haunting words were a powerful reminder of inequality in America. It was clear that the work required to translate these magnificent ideas into reality beckoned us back at our home institutions.

The Aspen Institute was a uniquely rejuvenating experience that furnished me with innumerable ideas and principles about citizenship, collegiality, and morality. I made some wonderful friendships, and returned to Massachusetts with a renewed sense of vigor about my responsibilities as a citizen, historian, teacher, and parent. To ascend from Plato’s cave into the light can be a blissful experience, but this is no final resting place. That kind of enlightenment demands that we return to our fellow citizens, roll up our sleeves, grab a sandwich from Chartwells, and get back to work.

## A History Lesson and the Lesson of History

By Hank Dobin, PhD\*

I remember vividly my “aha!” moment during the Wye Seminar in the summer of 2008. As we were discussing the *Declaration of Independence* and other documents written by the founders of the United States, an intriguing counter-factual question suddenly occurred to me: “Would we still be studying this 232-year-old document, written and signed by a coterie of seditious gentlemen, if the French fleet had not shown up at Yorktown?”

Such an acknowledgment of the contingencies of history is hardly new or revolutionary. Although it may be obvious, we seldom foreground for our students the reality that the winners, not the losers, get to write history. But for me, it threw into question the typically unexpressed assumptions about the “great works” that we were reading in the seminar, both as texts worthy of study and as vehicles of the educational tradition we prize and practice. Do these ideas somehow embody timeless and universal validity and value? Or are these words simply the ones that happened to emerge victorious in a five-thousand year contest called human history—a contest won less frequently by ideas than by armies, or money, or sometimes just plain luck? In other words, would we read the *Declaration* in the same way—or at all—if, as it appeared very likely in 1781, the British army had crushed that bothersome insurrection in the Americas?

I offered that tidbit of military analysis in 2008 based on little more than a passing familiarity with Revolutionary War history. I’ve since done some research, and it’s far worse than I thought. The realization of the ideas in the Declaration—ideas that we, at least in the United States, hold up as universal truths of mankind—hung on a small naval battle conducted five years later at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay that did

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not involve a single American! Rather, this little known engagement in September 1781 between the French fleet of twenty-four ships under Admiral de Grasse and the British fleet of nineteen ships under Admiral Graves was the pivotal battle for control of the coastal waters. No brilliant victory was achieved; in fact, the battle ended inconclusively after only two hours. But the British fleet suffered enough damage to persuade Graves to turn his ships back toward New York—thereby ceding control of the Chesapeake to the French, abandoning hopes of resupplying the British army at Yorktown, and guaranteeing Cornwallis’ surrender only six weeks later.\*

Is it too outrageous to say that American independence—and perhaps those principles of liberty, equality and democracy associated with the American experiment—can be understood as little more than by-products of a minor skirmish in a war between England and France that had been raging, off and on, since the fourteenth century? That’s certainly not the standard narrative of American history, of American exceptionalism, or of the principles articulated by the founders in the Declaration. Such inconvenient attention to facts can certainly also call into question the validity of the “self-evident” truths of that document on which the rest of the argument for independence depends. Consider just one: equality, in the context of the Declaration and the issue of slavery, is certainly problematic.

I’d like to turn to two other texts we read in the seminar to tease out the ramifications of this idea—and its impact on our too-comfortable assumptions about what constitutes truth and right: Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and Osama bin Laden’s “World Islamic Front Statement.” Although the two texts were not juxtaposed in our reader for the seminar, nor did our seminar leader invite us to compare them, my fixation on historical contingency leads me to consider them in relation to each other.

I pick out these texts for two reasons. First, both were written by outlaws. King was jailed in April 1963 for leading demonstrations in Birmingham. Bin Laden wrote his statement (with others) in 1998; he

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\*You can learn all you may want to know about this naval engagement in Harold Larabee’s 1964 book, *Decision at the Chesapeake* (Potter, NY).

was in hiding three years before the September 11 attacks. At the time the documents were written, both King and bin Laden were branded as threats to civil society—even if now (at least from the American perspective) King is regarded as a martyred hero for justice and bin Laden little more than a dead terrorist. These texts are manifestos aimed at challenging societal assumptions and at precipitating change.

Second, let me say immediately, the means proposed to effect that change are radically different. Although King chastises civic and religious leaders as complacent apologists, his letter is a compelling argument for non-violent civil disobedience as the only legitimate vehicle for change. Bin Laden’s statement, in contrast, makes the case for violent opposition against the West—in the context of justifiable retaliation for the wrongs against the Islamic people. If King promotes change by the Christ-like moral force of “turning the other cheek,” bin Laden advocates jihad and *lex talionis*—the Hammurabic, Koranic, and biblical formula of “an eye for an eye.” Bin Laden goes so far as to insist that there are no such things as innocent civilians. If American citizens select their government, pay taxes, serve in the armed forces—all in support of anti-Islam policies and actions—then they are not innocent, but complicit, and subject to the revenge sanctioned by Allah. We may find such claims reprehensible and, among Islamic leaders and scholars, such interpretations of Allah’s will remain controversial.

In a comparison *a propos* of the beginning of this essay, bin Laden’s statement is a litany of grievances against America that, in his mind, vindicate violent action—just as Jefferson’s *Declaration* is an inventory of charges against George III that justify armed rebellion. Similarly, the most powerful part of King’s letter is a long list of wrongs—from lynchings to a “degenerating sense of ‘nobodiness’”—suffered by blacks at the hands of white society. All three are compelling compilations of injustices—from the vantage point of the oppressed—that warrant action in return. And, of the three, only King eschews violence as a solution. It is surely worth acknowledging that, despite what Dr. King might have wished, most social and political change in the world has not been a result of non-violent civil disobedience, but instead of violent struggle.

And what if, 100 years from now, western civilization is in collapse

and fundamentalist Islamic society in the ascendant? What if *sharia*, rather than a western notion of justice, prevails? To pose the question more wryly: what will the Wye seminar participants be reading in 2113? Jefferson or bin Laden? Is it possible that our American ideals may be swept into the dustbin of history, along with other defunct or discredited ideologies such as monarchism or communism?

All of this begs a larger and tougher question: are ideas themselves the driving force of history? It's difficult to assert so in the face of the record. For most of history, the prime motivators appear to be land, natural and human resources, greed, and power. Arguably, in this newer era of instant mass communications and collective action, ideas as agents of change are more potent than ever. Nor would I want to deny the possibility that certain truths may be self-evident or universal. Perhaps the idea of human freedom is one such truth, even if an aspirational one, that will impel human history forward. We'd like to think so. Even if Cornwallis had not surrendered at Yorktown, in all likelihood the principles of personal liberty and self-determination that the United States has come to represent and which continue to proliferate across the globe would have prevailed in some other way and at some other time. But it's a humbling reminder that things could have turned out very differently, and that the principles we deem to be both timeless and sacred might just hang on as thin a reed as an indecisive naval battle in Chesapeake Bay—in fitting proximity to Wye—that no one even remembers.

December 2012

## **The 2006 Wye Faculty Seminar about “Citizenship and the America Polity”: Understanding the New South Africa**

By Nicholas R. Ellig, PhD\*

A test for the enduring impact of a faculty development experience is the extent to which it continues to influence activities in and outside the classroom. The Wye Faculty Seminar “Citizenship and the American Polity” is informing my teaching and guiding my scholarship years after participating in the seminar in 2006 at the Aspen Wye Conference Center in Queensland, Maryland. The opportunity to revisit and be introduced to classical texts exploring citizenship in a changing world stimulated my thinking about the challenges that must be overcome when seeking to achieve genuine political emancipation and other forms of social inclusion. This impact is most evident in my teaching and scholarship focusing on the efforts in South Africa to break away from the exclusionary system of formal apartheid. The readings and discussion from the Wye Faculty Seminar shaped my undergraduate liberal education seminar offered to first year students that used South Africa as a case for considering the roots of systemic social exclusion and the avenues for achieving greater social inclusion. My scholarship addressing social exclusion issues in a world where the effects of globalization are becoming more potent is also being guided by ideas honed in the seminar. My application of the Wye Faculty Seminar experience in my teaching and scholarship continues to demonstrate how many of the questions and ideas pertinent to examining citizenship in the United States have relevance for understanding social exclusion versus social inclusion in South Africa and elsewhere.

Students in my undergraduate liberal education seminar derive lessons about the causes of systemic social exclusion by learning about the history of South Africa. The vehicle for doing so is James Michener's novel *The*

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*Covenant*. Students read this historical novel with the objective of deriving both specific and general lessons about factors that contributed to the evolution of the apartheid system of rigid racial separation in South Africa and that served to sustain it for too many generations of South Africans. One of these contributing factors evident early in the history of South Africa is the emerging civil religion of the Afrikaners that provided an enduring and deeply rooted justification for the apartheid system. This civil religion viewed the whites in South Africa, most notably the Afrikaner descendants of the first Dutch settlers of the Cape Colony, as being chosen by God to bring “salvation” to the African subcontinent. This civil religion was used to provide theological cover for the exploitative system of apartheid, not unlike certain theological interpretations have done and continue to do in the United States.

Robert Bellah’s essay “Civil Religion in America”, included in the collection of readings for the Wye Faculty Seminar and discussed during the seminar, continues to be helpful for providing a conceptual framework and analytical guidance when referencing civil religion as a contributing factor to social exclusion in South Africa, in the United States and elsewhere. Noting the connection between civil religion and exclusion is not meant to serve as a general indictment of civil religion; rather, it is meant to help students to understand how the social cohesion fostered by civil religion can have corrosive consequences for certain groups in society if it is used to sustain exclusion rather than inclusion. Indeed, as students learn in the course when we examine the demise of formal apartheid and present day efforts to make the “new” South Africa more socially inclusive, civil religion was used by those opposed to apartheid to bring down the system.

The readings from the Wye Seminar are also instructive when examining the challenges being faced in South Africa as it seeks to realize the promise of democratization. The opportunities to read and reflect on the assigned articles about the promises and limitations of democracy enabled me to clarify and refine my thinking about the causes, outcomes and challenges of democracy. This expanded and more complicated understanding of democracy and of the democratization process helps to guide how my students and I seek to understand why genuine democracy

can be difficult to achieve and why democratization does not serve as a panacea for social exclusion. Again, using these ideas about democracy in the United States is beneficial for understanding why the democratic dividend is not presently benefiting all South Africans. As with the use of civil religion, applying these ideas about democracy to the South African case can lead to transferable lessons about the challenges of achieving greater social inclusion.

My own scholarship is also benefitting from my experience at the Wye Faculty Seminar. The seminar stimulated my thinking about the possible connections between globalization and social exclusion versus social inclusion. The readings addressing “Globalization and Responsibility” and “Education for the Polity” enabled me to reflect on how globalization might both encourage and restrict efforts to make societies more socially inclusive. This interest in how globalization might restrict efforts to achieve greater social inclusion was further stimulated by visits with scholars and activists in South Africa who suggested that the efforts to achieve a more inclusive society for all South Africans was not always supported by the new forces of globalization. I am using the sociological imagination, as defined by the American sociologist C. Wright Mills, to theorize about social exclusion issues that are partially shaped by globalization (e.g., unemployment, HIV-AIDS). These issues restrict the life chances of individuals by separating them (i.e., socially excluding them) from the institutions and resources they need to realize their desired quality of life outcomes. The hypotheses derived from this theorizing connecting globalization with social exclusion will be tested using longitudinal data from South Africa. A rudimentary data set that includes indicators of unemployment and HIV-AIDS in South Africa for the years since 1993 and scores on an index measuring globalization for the same time period has produced statistically significant and robust correlation coefficients showing that globalization might be contributing to greater social exclusion. The tasks now are to refine this analysis and to explain these results. Again, ideas derived from my experiences at the Wye Faculty Seminar might be helpful for doing so.

## Wye River Seminar – 30th Anniversary Essay

By Timothy Klitz, PhD\*

My experience at the Wye River Seminar was valuable and memorable, both in terms of the seminar content and the physical location. In the summer of 2003, I had just finished my second year as an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Washington & Jefferson College (W&J), a 1400-student liberal arts college in southwestern Pennsylvania. Dean James Dlugos, now President of Saint Joseph's College of Maine, invited me to participate in the seminar that summer, for which I am still thankful. I was teaching psychology students at all levels, but also teaching a section of our First-Year Seminar course, Freshman Seminar, and trying to figure out how to teach students about the liberal arts. Almost ten years later, I am a tenured professor teaching psychology and running our pre-health program. I am leaving the pre-health part of my job behind in a few months and I plan to get back to interacting with more freshmen students from across the curriculum.

My “place” memories about Wye might be the most interesting because I was so nervous about the experience itself. While most participants stayed at the Wye Woods facility, I was placed in the Houghton House facility, about 4 miles away. I was literally the only person in the facility for most of the time that I was there, which allowed me plenty of time to explore the intricate bathroom fixtures in my room (when I told my wife I was writing an essay about my seminar experience in Maryland about 10 years ago, my wife asked if that was the place with the fancy bathroom fixtures!) I also had the pleasure of wandering the entire building day or night: playing pool by myself in the basement rec room; peacefully observing the wonderful gardens behind the building; and exploring practically every inch of the entire building that I could ac-

cess without a key (and that was a lot of the building ... pretend I didn't mention that).

I also remember the drive from Wye Woods to Houghton House quite vividly. I traveled that route in my maroon Saturn a couple of times each day, enjoying the osprey nests on top of the telephone poles along the way (I think they were osprey ... I never did ask). The full fields of sunflowers were amazing. I still have pictures of the sea of yellow and green and black that I took prominently displayed at home. My most memorable pictures of the experience were of the large “gang” of vultures hanging out on the top of the tennis court fences near the Houghton House. I kept trying to figure out whether their continued presence there was symbolic of something (like my own uncertainty about being there). I just gave them a sideways glance, admired their beauty, and was thankful that I wasn't planning to play tennis anytime soon!

Although I have written exclusively about place so far, the conference too was memorable (the organizers will certainly be happy to know that I did get more out of the experience than just stalking a bunch of vultures!) As a relatively young faculty member, I was nervous and scared. I felt young. I felt inexperienced. I lacked confidence. On the final day of the seminar, we had “last call” comments to summarize our own individual experiences at the seminar. I told everyone that I felt “stupid” during a good portion of the seminar, but that I had learned a lot. Perhaps the nicest experience I had was an unsolicited follow-up email sent by a fellow participant, Madelyn Young from Converse College. Madelyn sent me an email sympathizing with my feelings and encouraging me to “find a way to implement some of the things we talked about” back at W&J. I still have that email sitting in my Wye folder in my file cabinet. A little bit of encouragement went a long way at that point in my career. Now that I think about it, it still does today!

Most of my uncertainty came from the fact that my undergraduate experience was at Northwestern University, and my graduate school experience was at the University of Minnesota, neither of which gave me a particularly strong “liberal arts” background. But, here I was teaching at a liberal arts school. I was quite alarmed that I hadn't seen more than a few of the Wye Seminar readings before the big spiral bound book of

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readings came in the mail. I felt a strong disconnect being at a liberal arts college, and at a liberal arts conference, but having little liberal arts background. I frankly felt terrible about that the whole time I was at Wye.

At some point, my attitude changed from one of fear to one of determination ... determination that I was going to take something back with me to W&J that I could use to improve myself as a liberal arts faculty member. While the readings and the in-seminar discussions were interesting and useful, perhaps more useful were the conversations outside of the seminar rooms. Talking with people about their experiences teaching, working with freshmen, and how they interacted with the administration at their schools was invaluable. I just remember feeling like the proverbial sponge, soaking in information from conversations with so many people between events, at volleyball games in the afternoon, and before, during and after the truly amazing performance of Sophocles' *Antigone*. By the end of the conference, I was feeling invigorated and ready to head back to my third year of teaching at W&J and ready to tackle my second year of teaching our Freshman Seminar class. Having experienced all of the uncertainty of my own background in the liberal arts while at the Wye conference, I felt like I understood a bit better the position of my incoming freshman students. Foremost, I felt confident that the liberal arts approach was indeed the way that I wanted to guide my current and future students.

## Wye Diversity Matters

By Prudence Layne, PhD\*

While the Aspen Institute has no control over the representatives from the various colleges and universities that attend their faculty seminar each summer, they do control the design, scope, and goals of those seminars. As a Black woman selected by my institution to attend the faculty institute back in 2010, I was immediately struck when my reading materials arrived by the absence, the concerns and voices from historically marginalized groups in a seminar whose focus was billed as "Citizenship and the Global Polity."

If our discussions were going to center around documents and persons deemed important in the founding principles of the United States and the comparison of those ideals to other nations, movements and groups, where were Arafat, Bhutto, Castro, Douglass, Ghandi, Mandela, Meir and Tutu? Where was Truth? How and why were the Black American and other world architects and shapers of their nation's principles missing from the assembled anthology of readings, even as Barack Obama had been elected as the first Black president of the United States two years before?

The silencing and erasure of the stories of oppressed peoples are not new and, ironically, are well documented. Most notably, James W. Loewen has written extensively about such omissions, including his work, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (1996), winner of the American Book Award and the Oliver Cromwell Cox Award for Distinguished Anti-Racist Scholarship. Similarly, Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (2005) is the only volume to tell America's story from the point of view of -- and in the words of -- America's women, factory workers, African-Americans,

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Native Americans, working poor, and immigrant laborers (and even here, not all voices are heard). By no means am I suggesting that the Aspen Institute's 2010 faculty seminar's collection of readings forms part of some grand conspiracy to rewrite the citizenship narratives of the United States and the rest of the world. However, these oversights signal even greater dangers about: attempts to capture and condense expansive narratives into easily consumed forms for audiences that are believed to be increasingly attention deficient; the negative consequences of stifling, (un-) (sub-) consciously, difficult and sometimes painful dialogues intrinsic to the process of nation-building; the failure of diverse representation and perspectives at decision-making levels to right these oversights. Would the 2010 faculty cohort, deemed among some of the best representatives from their institutions, be attentive to these dangers?

Among the 2010 cohort and standing out as part of my strongest recollections of that year was the unusually "large" contingent of faculty of color and the other members from our group who recognized and vocalized many of the concerns described above. Perhaps "large" is a slight exaggeration, but among the faculty of color that year were three African-American women, and four, including myself, from Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Puerto Rico, each living on the hyphen and straddling the boundaries of nations and cultures. We added a critical mass of voices and often overlooked perspectives to a chorus that may have been significantly altered without our presence. In addition to noting the absence of key important selections and representations in our readings, our dissection of our anthology engendered new analyses and ways of seeing traditional and well-known documents commonly used in college and university classrooms among the persons responsible for shaping those discourses. Furthermore, our discussions extended beyond the content to the general process of selection and representation of the readings. The testament of what our collective had managed in our seminar was most tangibly reflected in our unique production of Sophocles' *Antigone*, featuring Caribbean interpretations of the title character and her sister, the Italian mafia, and a memorable surfer dude, all set on a former Maryland slave plantation!

It is critical that any attempt to reflect the rich experiences of the past

thirty years from among the nearly 1200 Wye Faculty Seminar attendees reflect the lessons of diversity that may so easily have gone unexplored without the serendipitous composition of the 2010 cohort. Among those lessons for the Aspen Institute is the need for more diverse representation among its leadership to ensure that the broadest possible perspectives and themes will be inculcated in the design of each seminar. In addition, the higher education professionals in particular must hold themselves to account, exploring the silences and nuances of their readings. In asking ourselves, who is missing, who is not represented and why, not only do these questions become second nature, but we carry this heightened awareness and sensitivities into our classrooms and teachings. I can think of no greater reason for "Wye/why diversity matters." It matters because good citizenship and the global polity depend on it.

## Swimming in the Wye

By Linda M. Lemiesz, PhD, JD\*

When my boss, John Jay Iselin, proposed sending me to the Wye River Seminar, I appreciated his support. At the time, I did not know how rare it was to have a supervisor who was actually interested in my professional development. Jay took it upon himself to be a mentor, sometimes setting challenges for me that I found extremely puzzling. His goal in sending me to the Wye River Seminar was typically cryptic. He mumbled something about the number of prominent residents of that area and told me I should pack my bathing suit and take a swim down the river to meet these people. I needed to “step it up a level,” as he put it. Immediately, I had an image of myself in full swim attire, soaking wet, and breathing heavily from my unaccustomed athletic exertions, emerging from the river and horrifying people relaxing on their private beaches.

I pushed this thought aside and resolutely packed my bathing suit.

The massive tome issued by the Wye River Seminar reassured me. Surely, we would not be doing a lot of swimming if we were going to discuss all these materials? I began to revel in the notion that I would be returning to graduate school, with a whole week of nothing to do but focus on my rereading of these fabulous texts. I felt a certain anxiety about whether my classmates of provosts and other academic officers would have much respect for someone from Student Services. I had mastered Latin and Greek as part of my Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, but since that time, my relationship to the great texts of Aristotle and Plato and their contemporaries was essentially private. I dipped into Latin and Greek works when I needed sustenance, but I did not see a connection

between these private studies and my work as a Dean of Students. I wondered if I would have anything to contribute to the discussion.

The first day of the seminar felt very much like graduate school. I tried to dazzle my classmates by bringing the full weight of my classical education to the table. I found myself having objections to the various translations. The translation of the Greek *arête* particularly irked me. “Excellence,” yes, but in a very particular way. The excellence of becoming the essence of what you are intended to be at its highest level. I found myself struggling to explain to my classmates why it was important to understand the concept behind the choice of vocabulary. I was at my pedantic worst.

Simultaneously with attending the seminar, I was reading *American Sphinx: the Character of Thomas Jefferson* by the historian Joseph J. Ellis. My seminar leader joked that I was the first person she had ever met who had felt the need to bring additional reading material to the Wye Seminar, but Ellis’s book liberated me. A lengthy section of his book describes the political process that went on behind the scenes as Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence, the give and take between delegates that, in subtle ways, helped Jefferson clarify his own thoughts while simultaneously broadening his vision. I had never shown much aptitude for team projects, a failing that Jefferson apparently shared. Now, Ellis was arguing that Jefferson’s willingness to throw himself into the stream of discussion was perhaps as important to the drafting of the Declaration as Jefferson’s superior writing abilities.

I became a lot more subdued on day two of the Seminar, thanks to Ellis. My classmates, less intimidated by work that was more contemporary, simultaneously became more emboldened. Suddenly, words started to flow, as people jumped in to share their disparate backgrounds and ideas. By our third day at the seminar table, we had pretty much liberated ourselves from a slavish devotion to our readings and digressed into our own philosophies. The discussion crystallized for me my frustration with the inability to translate *arête*. I realized that my educational theory could be traced back to my early ponderings about the word. My role as an educator was that of a helper along a student’s path to achieving *arête*, whether that be scholastic excellence or design excellence or even the

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excellence of being a generous friend or a passionate musician or an accomplished painter. Despite all the intervening years, that education in Greek was the spring from which my career still flowed.

At the time, I felt that “Eureka!” moment was the most important insight of my week at Wye. I was, once again, mistaken. That afternoon, we took a break and made a visit into town, chatting all the while about our various university employers. Most of us had been sponsored for the Seminar by a particularly supportive college president, and we reflected on how these relationships had enriched our careers and our lives. My employer, Cooper Union, had already gone through a phase of stringent budget cuts, and I was curious to learn how other people had managed to encourage their staff’s professional development during times of austerity. One of my classmates observed that, although he appreciated the material comfort of the Wye Conference Center, the real luxury was having time to think and a president who encouraged his intellectual growth. In retrospect, this casual remark changed my entire theory of supervision. No matter how dismal the budget, I find I can create time for staff to come together and talk about books, articles or ideas that they have found exciting. We may not be able to sit on the shores of the Wye, but we can have the moments of contemplation and connection, the inspiration of great books and each other’s enthusiasm.

I never took that swim in the Wye River. Yet its currents still carry me along.

## Antigone

By the Wye Summer Faculty Seminar Players

Edited by Christopher Malone, PhD\*

*Setting: Jerusalem, capital of Israelistine*

*Chorus:*

GW Bush’s Road Map to Peace in the Middle East is achieved. Its provision calls for joint rule of the new state of Israelistine. Ariel Sharon is to rule for 4 years, followed by 4 years of rule by Yasir Arafat. At the end of Sharon’s term, he refuses to step aside, citing continued terrorists attacks. Arafat mounts a coup. In the ensuing battle, both leaders are slain. GW steps up to fill the power vacuum by declaring himself ruler of Israelistine. His first decree as leader is that Sharon will receive proper burial, but Arafat’s body is left out beyond the customary 2 days, an insult and extremely irreverent gesture in the Islamic tradition, as punishment for mounting the coup that caused both deaths.

### Scene I

*Suheir:*

My sister, have you heard the news?

*Samia:*

no, Suheir, tell me, what news?

*Suheir:* Our new leader Bush is burying Ariel Sharon in proper Jewish tradition, but he has refused to bury our dear father Yasir in the proper

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Muslim tradition. And he said that anyone who touches the body will die.

*Samia:*  
No Way.

*Suheir:*  
Way.

*Samia:*  
No Way.

*Suheir:*  
Way. Damn!

*Samia:*  
That's some cold blooded shit...but what can we do?

*Suheir:*  
The hell with that – I'm going to bury him.

*Samia:*  
What? That's on you - girl, you got a hot mind over chilly things.

*Suheir:*  
Well if you ain't with me, then Get gone (cackles like a chicken!)

## Scene 2

*Chorus:*  
Now here he comes, the new king of the land, GW Bush – George and Barbara's son, newly named by the god's fate. What plan that beats about his mind has made him call this session, sending his summons to all?

*GW:*  
God has chased out all the evildoers. Ariel Sharon and Yasir Arafat could not agree to govern this great land in peace. So I have come to restore your land to its rightful place in the Middle East. I say to all the people of Israelistine: this land is your land – this land is our land. This land was made for you and me.

I say to you, the people of Israelistine, Sharon the patriot died defending this holy land. Arafat the terrorist chose the path of evil. He has chosen his own fate. He has chosen his own destruction.

*Chorus:*  
This resolution is your own, GW Bush. In this matter of the terrorist and the true, for you can make such rulings as you will about the living and the dead.

Hark, here comes the guard –here comes the guard!

*Bush:*  
What is it?

*Guard:*  
I want to tell you about myself, it isn't me sir – no, no, no, it ain't me babe!

*Bush:*  
SAY IT! SAY IT!

*Chorus:*  
Singing - Someone left the corpse out in the rain, and I don't think that I can take it...

(*Guard and Bush look at Chorus with disdain and glare.*)

*Guard:*  
No – someone buried Arafat!

*Bush:*  
Was it the evildoers?

*Guard:*  
No, Mr. President...it was Suheir, daughter of Yasir Arafat! It was she  
She completed the ritual!

*(Suheir is dragged in by the other guards)*

*Bush:*  
Sewer, what were you thinking?

*Suheir:*  
What did you call me? My name is Suheir...

*Bush:*  
Whatever –

*Suheir:*  
I buried my father as Allah demands. Allah Akhbar – God is Great!

*Bush:*  
You would dare to defy me and the freedom loving people of Israelis-  
tine? We came to bring you peace, security, justice. We came to hunt  
down and smoke out the terrorists - no, wait, that was in Afghanistan...  
just who do you think you are messing with?

*Suheir:* For me it was not Allah who made that order.  
Nor did that Justice who lives with the gods below  
mark out such laws to hold among mankind.  
Nor did I think your orders were so strong  
that you, a mortal man, could over-run  
the gods' unwritten and unfailing laws.  
Not now, nor yesterday's, they always live,  
and no one knows their origin in time.  
So not through fear of any man's proud spirit

would I be likely to neglect these laws,  
draw on myself the gods' sure punishment.  
I knew that I must die; how could I not?  
even without your warning. If I die  
before my time, I say it is a gain.  
Who lives in sorrows many as are mine  
how shall he not be glad to gain his death?  
And so, for me to meet this fate, no grief.  
But if I left that corpse, my mother's son,  
dead and unburied I'd have cause to grieve  
as now I grieve not.  
And if you think my acts are foolishness  
the foolishness may be in a fool's eye.

*Bush:*  
*(Looks at Karl Rove)* What the hell did she just say?

*Chorus:*  
The girl is bitter – she is her father's child. She can not yield to trouble nor  
could he.

*Suheir:*  
So fry me!

*Bush:*  
Done!

*Chorus:*  
Look there! Samia is coming out. She looves her sister...and mourns,  
with clouded brow and bloodied cheeks, tears on her lovely face.

*Samia:*  
I'm in. I want a piece of this.

*Bush:*  
Well bring it on!

*Suheir:*  
I've got this Samia.

*Samia:*  
No, I'm in!

*Suheir:*  
I gave you the shot. You blew it. YOU'RE OUT!!

*Samia: (exit)*

*Chorus:* Fortunate they whose lives have no taste of pain.  
For those whose house is shaken by the gods  
escape no kind of doom. It extends to all the kin  
like the wave that comes when the winds of Thrace  
run over the dark of the sea.  
The black sand of the bottom is brought from the depth;  
the beaten capes sound back with a hollow cry.

Ancient the sorrow of Labdacus' house, I know.  
Dead men's grief comes back, and falls on grief.  
No generation can free the next.  
One of the gods will strike. There is no escape.  
So now the light goes out  
for the house of Oedipus, while the bloody knife  
cuts the remaining root. Folly and Fury have done this.

What madness of man, O Zeus, can bind your power?  
Not sleep can destroy it who ages all,  
nor the weariless months the gods have set. Unaged in time  
monarch you rule of Olympus' gleaming light.  
Near time, far future, and the past,

one law controls them all:  
any greatness in human life brings doom.

Wandering hope brings help to many men.  
But others she tricks from their giddy loves,  
and her quarry knows nothing until he has walked into flame.  
Word of wisdom it was when someone said,  
ÒThe bad be comes the good  
to him a god would doom.  
Only briefly is that one from under doom.

TIME OUT!

*Chorus:*

(*Nelson*) Ladies and gentlemen we're engaged in an epic battle between  
good and evil. We want to know what you think.

### Scene 3

*Chorus:*

(*Jenna Bush enters*) Here is your daughter. Does she come in grief at the  
fate of her lover, in pain that she's tricked of this wedding, the first same-  
sex marriage in Israelistine?

*GW:*

Jenna, you need to move on. Forget about Sewer. Can't you find some  
nice guy at UT Austin?

*Jenna:*

My father, I am yours. You keep me straight ...I'll do what you say.

*GW:*

There's my Jenna, daughter. I know you loved her, but it's for the best.  
Without order, there's nothing but chaos. After all, she's just a woman.

*Chorus:*

We think, unless our age is cheating us, that what you say is sensible and right.

*Jenna:*

Daddy, I know she screwed up, but maybe you should listen to what they're saying in the streets.

*Chorus:*

Mister President, if your daughter has spoken to the point, you should take her lesson. She should do the same. Both sides have spoken well.

*GW:*

Jenna, you're going to tell me what to do? They're going to tell me what to do? You worship God in your way, and I'll worship Him in His way.

*Jenna:*

Daddy, if you let her die, I'll die. I'll just die. I'll kill myself!

*GW:*

Don't flatter me with "Daddy", you woman's slave!

*Jenna:*

If you really loved me, you wouldn't do this.

*Chorus:*

Lord, she has gone with all the speed of rage. When such a woman is grieved, her mind is hard.

*GW:*

Let her go. What the hell do I care? It's a done deal. Where's Spot? Come here boy...hey, when are you going write a book like Millie did?

*Chorus:*

You plan for both the punishment of death?

*GW:*

Nah.

*Chorus:*

And what death have you chosen for Suheir?

*GW:*

When I get through with her, she's going to wish she was dead.

*Chorus:* Love un conquered in fight, love who falls on our havings.

You rest in the bloom of a girl's unwithered face.

You cross the sea, you are known in the wildest lairs.

Not the im mor tal gods can fly,

nor men of a day. Who has you within him is mad.

You twist the minds of the just. Wrong they pursue and are ru ined.

You made this quarrel of kin dred before us now.

Desire looks clear from the eyes of a lovely bride:

power as strong as the founded world.

For there is the goddess at play with whom no man can fight.

#### **Scene 4**

*Chorus:* Now I am carried beyond all bounds.

My tears will not be checked.

I see Suheir depart

to the chamber where all men sleep.

*Suheir:* Everybody dies.

*Chorus:* With praise as your portion you go

in fame to the vault of the dead.

Untouched by wasting disease,

not paying the price of the sword,

of your own motion you go.

Alone among mortals will you descend  
in life to the house of Death.

*Suheir:* Don't cry for me, Argentina.

*Chorus:* God's child and god she was.  
We are born to death.  
Yet even in death you will have your fame,  
to have gone like a god to your fate,  
in living and dying alike.

*Suheir:*  
Papa was a rolling stone. Where ever he left his hat was his home. And  
when he died, all he left us was alone.

*Chorus:*  
You showed respect for the dead. So we for you: but power is not to be  
thwarted so. Your self-sufficiency has brought you down.

*Suheir:*  
Alone again, naturally.

*GW:*  
Take her away. Throw her in a hole and let her rot, for all I care.

*Suheir:*  
Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray to Allah my sole to keep. And if I die  
before I wake, I pray to Allah my sole to keep. But if it is the others who  
are wrong, I wish them no greater punishment than mine.

*Chorus:*  
The same tempest of mind as ever, controls the girl.

*GW:*  
Let's do this thing. Let's roll!

*Suheir:*  
So death it is.

*GW:*  
Oh yeah.

*Suheir:*  
Forgive them Allah. They know not what they do.

*Chorus:* Dana' suffered too.  
She went from the light to the brass-built room,  
chamber and tomb together. Like you, poor child,  
she was of great descent, and more, she held and kept  
the seed of the golden rain which was Zeus.  
Fate has terrible power.  
You cannot escape it by wealth or war.  
No fort will keep it out, no ships outrun it.  
Remember the angry king,  
son of Dryas, who raged at the god and paid,  
pent in a rock-walled prison. His bursting wrath  
slowly went down. As the terror of mad ness went,  
he learned of his frenzied attack on the god.  
Fool, he had tried to stop  
the dancing women pos sessed of god,  
the fire of Dionysus, the songs and flutes.

Where the dark rocks divide  
sea from sea in Thrace  
is Salmydessus whose savage god  
beheld the terrible blinding wounds  
dealt to Phineus' sons by their father's wife.  
Dark the eyes that looked to avenge their mother.

Sharp with her shuttle she struck, and blooded her hands.

Wasting they wept their fate,  
settled when they were born  
to Cleopatra, unhappy queen.  
She was a princess too, of an ancient house,  
reared in the cave of the wild north wind, her father.  
Half a goddess but, child, she suffered like you.

## Scene 5

*Greenspan:*

Mr. President, the economic indicators indicate that the forecast which indicates that a downturn with respect to consumer demand may be on the horizon if substantial investment is not cultivated in the investor class of Israelistine, as shown by this graph.

*GW:*

God damn it, Alan. I told you not to bring any bad forecasts to me during our war on terrorism.

*Greenspan:*

Mr. President, based upon the best economic indicators that we can indicate, we have seen indications that substantial growth will only accrue to the future if our occupation of Israelistine will be limited to the short term, and the market will be able to recover through investment strategies that have been devised through a negative disincentive stimulus package that your first administration put into effect through tax incentive and deficit enlargement induction. Plus, on top of that, if you allow Suheir to die, your whole family and empirical dreams will die as well.

*GW:*

Karl, what'd he just say?

*Karl:*

Mr. President, given the disutility created by the policies you've carried out..., you're screwed.

*GW:*

This whole crew of economists are money mad.

*Greenspan:*

And elected officials tend toward ambition. But wait, I forget you weren't elected.

*(Greenspan exits)*

*Chorus:*

Lord, he is gone. Terrible prophecies and since the time when I first grew gray hair, his sayings have been true.

*GW:*

I know this is true.

*Chorus:*

It is true. You were never elected. And you know it is follie not to follow his advice.

*GW:*

*(Look to Karl)* Karl, what should I do?

*Karl:*

Mr. President, you need to release Suheir immediately if you wish to avoid these dire economic consequences that Alan Greenspan forecast.

*GW:*

Call Carl Rumsfeld! Tell Defense to release Suheir!

*Chorus:* God of the many names, Semele's golden child,  
child of Olympian thunder, Italy's lord.

Lord of Eleusis, where all men come  
to mother Demeter's plain.  
Bacchus, who dwell in Thebes,  
by Ismenus' running water,  
where wild Bacchic women are at home,  
on the soil of the dragon seed.  
Seen in the glaring flame, high on the double mount,  
with the nymphs of Parnassus at play on the hill,  
seen by Kastalia's flowing stream.  
You come from the ivied heights,  
from green Euboea's shore.  
In immortal words we cry  
your name, lord, who watch the ways,  
the many ways of Thebes.

This is your city, honored beyond the rest,  
the town of your mother's miracle-death.  
Now, as we wrestle our grim disease,  
come with healing step from Parnassus' slope  
or over the moaning sea.  
Leader in dance of the fire-pulsing stars,  
overseer of the voices of night,  
child of Zeus, be manifest,  
with due companionship of Maenad maids  
whose cry is but your name.

## Scene 6

*Condoleeza Rice:*  
(*look grieved*) You won't believe this.

*Chorus:*  
What is the grief that you bring?

*Condi:*  
They're dead. The living are responsible.

*Chorus:*  
Who died? Who did the murder. Tell us now.

*Condi:*  
Jenna Bush killed herself. Her blood is on her Daddy. What are we going to do about it.?

(*Enter Laura Bush*)

*Chorus:* Laura Bush is with us now, I see.  
G.W. Bush's poor wife. She may have come by chance.  
She may have heard something about her son.

*Laura:*  
What y'all talkin' about?

*Condi:* Dear lady, I was there, and I shall tell,  
leaving out nothing of the true account.  
Why should I make it soft for you with tales  
to prove myself a liar? Truth is right.  
I followed your husband to the plain's far edge,  
where Polyneices' corpse was lying still  
unpitied. The dogs had torn him all apart.  
We prayed the goddess of all journeyings,  
and Pluto, that they turn their wrath to kindness,  
we gave the final purifying bath,  
then burned the poor remains on new-cut boughs,  
and heaped a high mound of his native earth.  
Then turned we to the maiden's rocky bed,  
death's hollow marriage-chamber.  
But, still far off, one of us heard a voice

in keen lament by that unblest abode.  
He ran and told the master. As G.W. Bush came  
he heard confusion crying. He groaned and spoke:  
Am I a prophet now, and do I tread  
the saddest of all roads I ever trod?  
My son's voice crying! Servants, run up close,  
stand by the tomb and look, push through the crevice  
where we built the pile of rock, right to the entry.  
Find out if that is Jenna Bush's voice I hear  
or if the gods are tricking me indeed.  
We obeyed the order of our mournful mas ter.  
In the far corner of the tomb we saw  
her, hanging by the neck, caught in a noose  
of her own linen veiling.  
Jenna Bush em braced her as she hung, and mourned  
his bride's de struc tion, dead and gone below,  
his father's actions, the unfated mar riage.  
When G.W. Bush saw him, he groaned terribly,  
and went toward him, and called him with lament:  
ÒWhat have you done, what plan have you caught up,  
what sort of suffering is killing you?  
Come out, my child, I do beseech you, come!  
The boy looked at him with his angry eyes,  
spat in his face and spoke no further word.  
He drew his sword, but as his father ran,  
he missed his aim. Then the unhappy boy,  
in anger at himself, leant on the blade.  
It entered, half its length, into his side.  
While he was conscious he embraced the maiden,  
holding her gently. Last, he gasped out blood,  
red blood on her white cheek.  
Corpse on a corpse he lies. He found his marriage.  
Its celebration in the halls of Hades.  
So he has made it very clear to men  
that to reject good counsel is a crime.

*(Laura returns to the house)*

*Chorus:*

What do you make of this? The first lady has gone in silence. We know her mind is nothing...I mean, we know nothing of her mind.

*Condi:* I'll go see what's up. There may be heavy danger in mute grief.

*(Condi exits; GW enters)*

*Chorus:*

But look! The King draws near. His own hand brings the witness of his crime, the doom he brought onto himself.

*GW:*

What the hell have I done?

*Chorus:*

You've learned justice, though it's come too late.

*GW:*

Why did God do it? Why did he lead me to temptation? Why did he lead me astray?

*(Re-enter Condi)*

*Condi:*

Sorry Mr. President, but that's not it.

*GW:*

Bring it on Condi.

*Condi:*

Laura's dead. She shot herself. She used a Saturday night special knock-off that cleared airport security.

*(Alan re-enters)*

*Alan Greenspan:* That's not all, sir. America's economy is in ruins. The instability demonstrated by your family's demise accompanied by the failure of the roadmap to Peace has caused consumer confidence to drop to a level not seen since 1929.

*GW:* This is my guilt. I brought it on myself and my nation. (*Drop to knees*) Have I become the evil-doer which I've battled throughout my career? Karl? Condi? Alan? Take me away

*Chorus:* Follow up with audience on this question.....

## **Lasting Impressions**

By Twyla Miranda, Ph.D.\*

My experience with the Wye Faculty Seminar occurred in July of 1998. My remembrances include driving a rental Nissan over the looming Chesapeake Bay Bridge with clenched teeth and white knuckles; the friendly, scholarly group of professors and teachers who embraced with gusto the long list of readings; and the authentic Maryland crab boil, prepared with pride. I remember the buzz of animated discussions and our celebration of strong ideas that were deliberated so long ago by Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, and others. But what I remember most were words and concepts: "the common good," "the American polity," "the social contract," and that I was inspired to incorporate those concepts into any appropriate courses at my University from that time forward. I drove back over the bridge with a satchel full of notes and readings.

However, I was not scheduled to teach philosophy, or foundations of education, or humanities courses in July 1998. My primary assignments at Texas Wesleyan University were education methodology courses, helping pre-service teachers understand how classrooms work and how best to motivate learners. At the end of August, just before the fall term was to begin, our renowned philosophy professor, Dr. Ronald F. Reed, died unexpectedly from heart failure. I was asked to teach his philosophy courses, and so, most auspiciously, I turned to the Wye Faculty Seminar readings and my notes of our discussions. To fill the shoes of Ron Reed was impossible, yet the readings and notes and memories of facilitated conversations only six weeks earlier helped me through. For fifteen years since, I have devoted much of my teaching assignments in the School of Education to facilitating philosophical discussions at the undergraduate, master and doctoral level. I am certain the Wye Faculty Seminar gave me

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the impetus and confidence that I could do the work needed.

You might ask how writings from John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Martin Luther King influence educators and what we do in classrooms. Aren't the ideas promoted and read about during the Wye seminar more political than educational? On the surface that notion may appear to be true, but underneath a political philosophy is the powerful concept of the polity itself, the group of individuals who have formed a coalition for the common good of all. A healthy polity must envision an educated populace who makes wise decisions, who encourages conversation about issues of concern from all angles and from all voices able to speak their minds, and who considers how best to educate individuals. For example, after publishing *Two Treatises of Government* in 1690, Locke expands his ideas about the polity's educational practices by publishing *Some Thoughts about Education* in 1693. He explains that for him, an educated individual is one who is virtuous (who has a relationship with God and with other people), extols wisdom (who manages business and personal affairs so that family and community will prosper), shows good breeding (behaves fairly and without condescension), and has some learning (Locke would prefer cognitive qualities developed by playful activity). These traits will serve a polity well. And such traits continue to be important in today's American polity; the discussion becomes real and personal when decisions are needed regarding how best to education one's children for virtue, wisdom, breeding and learning.

Rousseau posits in his *Social Contract* (1762) that we humans are born naturally good and free (yet we are in chains due to society), and he further indicates in *Emile, or On Education* (1762) that we are naturally inclined to learn and develop as we mature, despite the intentions of society. For Rousseau, an educated person is one who matures into citizenship, who participates as a free individual in the governance of both the self and the necessary society formed by the social contract. In properly educating individuals, a society fulfills both individuals' needs and the societal demands. Voices are heard, thoughts are shared, reason develops. Even today, such forces continue to play tug of war with our American polity. Where does individual liberty begin and end? How

does concern for the common good inform, infringe upon, and/or educate our citizens?

And Martin Luther King? What about his views on education? What does his poignant 1963 letter written in the Birmingham jail to southern white church clergymen say about education? First, he is in agreement with Rousseau, that the yearning for freedom, a natural birthright, will manifest itself in the polity; it will be known as a force for good sooner than later, despite the plea to "wait" from the white pastors' moderate views. He emphasizes that the civil rights needed by the American polity – inclusive of blacks – ensures an education that allows voices to be heard and builds regard for the individual person, no matter what skin color, while securing obedience to just and moral laws. And second, in his letter, King raises the difficult educational question. How does one reason which laws are just and moral? How does education prepare learners to know what laws to follow and what laws to disobey? King writes that his decision to participate in non-violent disobedience is not made lightly; rather, he and his fellow resistance marchers have patiently educated themselves by collecting the facts, they have offered to negotiate, they have prayed and spent hours in self-reflection and purification, and finally, only then, followed the call to action. Education practices that give students ample opportunities to discuss actions and consequences, legal and civil rights, and the concept of the common good prepares them to enter the American polity. A "conversational" education develops citizens for democracy; it is democracy in action.

What has continued to impress me is reading the Aspen Institute publication *The Aspen Idea*, which is filled with seminar invitations and articles about people with different belief systems who meet together to reason about the common good. Their published conversations make public their educated thinking, and we readers profit from the discussions as well. I am appreciative of the Wye Faculty Seminar that began the path for me in 1998. Democracy for the American polity will continue to flourish if such discussions are part of all our lives.

## Wye High

By Glenn Petersen, PhD\*

My experience at the 2008 Wye River Faculty Seminar was perilously idiosyncratic, I'm afraid, but I've a hunch that at least some of it will resonate with others. For lack of a better term, I'd call that experience a "high," one that I had been sorely missing for years, and which, alas, I haven't really known since. I sat out under the stars night after night thoroughly engrossed in conversation, utterly unself-conscious, utterly absorbed, utterly happy. What an unexpected joy! This came about through the simultaneous stimulation of two quite contradictory aspects of my being. Let me explain what the unexpected juxtaposition of the company and the conversation did for me.

My route to Wye River passes through Vietnam. When I returned from the war in 1967, shortly after my 20th birthday, I struggled with the residue of combat in what seem like diametrically opposed ways. I threw myself into my studies, advancing through a GED high school equivalency diploma and on to community college night classes and matriculation at a small state college before finally arriving at an Ivy League university for my graduate work. At the same time, though, I was drinking myself to sleep every night. I spent the following 25 years pretty much steeped in this pattern, working incredibly hard and drinking almost as hard the rest of the time. Both activities served the same purpose: they kept my mind from wandering into a series of dark alleyways I sought to avoid. One of the by-products of this headlong rush was, remarkably, that I became a highly successful academic. I accumulated the savvy and skills necessary to navigate the reefs and shoals of professional life, schmoozing at conferences, receptions, meals, and in spontaneous barroom conversations. By the time I was 40 I was a full professor and department head, with

who knows what further challenges lying ahead. Then my daughter was born, rending the fabric of denial I'd managed to shroud myself in for decades. The emotions I'd kept in check for so long swept over me, the war returned with a vengeance, and I had to confront the fact that henceforth the only way I was going to achieve any degree of clarity was to stop drinking. And with that it seemed that almost everything in my professional career came to an abrupt halt. I could no longer bear to hang out and talk, to network, to kibitz. When I wasn't with my family or in the classroom, I retreated to near hermetic life in my study.

Then came the Wye Seminar. While I don't have much trouble engaging in classrooms, where order and formality create limits for interpersonal interaction, or in one-on-one conversations with students and colleagues in my office, I find just sitting around talking almost unbearable. All my demons return: I feel exposed, almost as if I'm under fire again. And yet at Wye River I found myself sitting calmly far into each evening, thoroughly immersed in the ideas and materials we were discussing. Something different happened there.

While others unwound over beer and wine, I was able to sit calmly and clearheaded, conversing with colleagues who shared my desire to unravel and examine the concepts we'd been poring over earlier in the day, moving from theory to the realities of academic and civic life, and on to our shared experiences with the kinds of teaching and participation most conducive to public engagement. I've tried this before (and since), in other venues, but I never seem to overcome my wretched discomfort just sitting and talking with people. There was something different at Wye, something that allowed me to shut off my self-consciousness and lose myself in the flow of shared absorption. What a blessed relief it was.

Other things from outside the seminar room added to this sense of flow. One was a long walk during which I was completely absorbed in recounting a new seminar I'd just taught on peace and war. I recall describing the thrill of teaching the *Iliad* for the first time to a colleague who grasped the importance I placed on Robert Fagles' translation, which unlike most, opens with the first word from the original Greek text, *menin*, "rage." "Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles..." it goes. Another was a drive with a participant to hunt out the nearby plantation

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Frederick Douglass escaped from when he fled slavery. While the values underlying the readings we read cry out for face-to-face dialogue, this is precisely what I find so difficult to engage in. The Wye Seminar provided me with a context in which I was finally able to do so. I was so deeply engrossed in plowing through ideas and listening to and digesting others' views that for a time the antisocial character of my being wafted away.

Some piece of the secret to all this lies in that decision to begin my course on peace and war with the Iliad and "rage." The same passion and commitment that led me first to enlist and then to recklessly pursue a host of hazards in Vietnam continue to generate in me lasting bitterness at being betrayed by President Johnson and Defense Secretary McNamara. I live with this tension all the time, and it's a big part of why I identify with Achilles. I bring all this with me to the classroom as well and exhaust myself trying to keep them in balance (which is, no doubt, the point). When I was young I could manage both the professional career and regular forays into alcohol-fueled escape, but no longer. At Wye River it was the experience of simply sitting and being and sharing with likeminded people, without having to worry about whether they think I'm crazy because of my fierce intensity, and without feeling responsible for managing everything, that made it all so blissful for me. I live with much anger just beneath the surface, and with continual fear that it will rise to the surface and explode. (Just yesterday I erupted at a colleague over issues of SAT scores and admissions during—of all things—an interview with a candidate for our provost's position; how embarrassing). Within the protective web of good, engaging conversation there by the Wye River, though, I relaxed and engaged and let my mind flow without my usual need to hang back, all the while keeping a stifflingly close watch on myself and my surroundings. I gave in for those few nights to my fierce need to speak while the good company simultaneously freed me from my equally deep fear of calling attention to myself. What a relief, what a treasure.

## The Declaration of Independence and the Liberal Arts

By David Rehm, PhD\*

The *Declaration of Independence*, authored by Thomas Jefferson and approved by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, is famous for what it declares (American independence from British rule) and is well-known to all who come through the American educational system. In honor of the 30th anniversary of the Wye Seminars, it seems worthwhile to ask why this document should be studied in the context of a seminar which aims to model liberal education at its best. In other words, in what ways does the *Declaration* embody the liberal arts?

It seems fairly trivial to say that the *Declaration of Independence* "declares" something. A declaration alone isn't particularly impressive: a declaration is the equivalent of an assertion. Assertions abound in discourse, and they are made readily and frequently enough with no justification whatsoever.

Jefferson's declaration is impressive because it functions as an argument. An argument is a series of propositions such that one or more propositions, the premises, function as that on the basis of which another proposition, the conclusion, is held. An argument requires a series of propositions with a logical connection among them. Arguments such as these lie at the heart of a liberal arts education. To put it another way, the ability to make arguments – orally and in writing – and to provide evidence to justify them such that one's audience will be convinced – whether this occurs regarding literature, history, art, philosophy, psychology, chemistry, or business – is the foundation of a liberal arts education. And it's very hard work which requires significant assumptions, which we will see as we investigate more.

Jefferson's *Declaration* is an argument. It argues on behalf of what

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Jefferson and the Continental Congress want to declare at the end of the document. The conclusion to this argument is easy to spot: the final paragraph begins, “We, therefore, ... publish and declare ... that these United Colonies are ... free and independent states...”. The “therefore” signals the completion of the argument made throughout. The opening paragraph, by contrast, prefaces the *Declaration* by explaining to the reader the importance of providing an argument or a justification for what the authors will declare at the end. Jefferson indicates that when it becomes necessary for one group to dissolve the political bonds which tie it to another, that group should indicate the causes for the dissolution.

The causes for the dissolution – for declaring the freedom of the thirteen colonies from rule by Great Britain – occupy most of the declaration. But it’s important to realize how sophisticated Jefferson’s argument here is. He could have essentially said, “we’ve been treated really badly by the British and thus should be allowed to govern ourselves instead of being governed badly by them.” And then he could have listed the grievances which occupy so much of the document. (There are twenty-seven of these complaints.) But Jefferson is looking not for a strong case or a case that will provoke sympathy. He wants an iron-clad case. To that end, the grievances or complaints cannot bear the entire argument. They need to be the evidence upon which a further argument relies. To put it another way, Jefferson wants to think about the context in which any group of people should be allowed to break away from their rulers, and thus he begins the second paragraph with some foundational principles that he believes all human beings would ascribe to. Once there are principles in place to which all would agree, it becomes much more manageable to make the case for the particular instance of separation which is referred to here. Jefferson essentially argues that all human beings have inalienable rights and that if any government tries to take away those “untakeable” rights, then those humans shall be justified in separating from that government. Thus the list of 27 grievances provides examples of ways in which inalienable rights of human beings are trespassed upon. Jefferson makes a compelling and sophisticated argument through the *Declaration*, and it does not rely merely upon the grievances.

Jefferson displays in the second paragraph a sophisticated and origi-

nal understanding of 18th century British and Scottish philosophy. The purpose of this paper is not to delve into all of the details of his knowledge – much has been written about that. The point is to emphasize that the ability to construct an argument that relies on first principles or principles agreed to by most reasonable readers is superb. It ensures the widest possible audience for and agreement with the argument. Such a background knowledge of philosophy and theology – which typically deal with first principles – is absolutely essential to liberal education. Ideas have to be grounded in other ideas and principles, until bedrock is discovered. Liberal education relies upon the ability to understand and work with such bedrock.

Suffice it to say that the evidence which Jefferson provides on behalf of the destruction of the ends of human existence is significant. The list of grievances is weighty. One of the complaints in contemporary argument is that there is often not enough evidence cited on behalf of one’s position. There is no paucity of such evidence in the *Declaration*. And Jefferson engages in a further tactic that is absolutely central in liberal education: he anticipates objections and counter arguments. He does this particularly in the third and fourth paragraphs of the *Declaration* by indicating the petitioning that has taken place and by reminding readers of various reminders and warnings to the British.

Throughout the *Declaration*, Jefferson displays a respect for his audience. Certainly, some of this is rhetorical. But it is also designed to be genuine: an explanation of what the *Declaration* will do in the first paragraph, an appeal to truths that all hold to be “self-evident”, setting out facts “to a candid world,” and “appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world” in the final paragraph all are designed to show respect for anyone reading this *Declaration* and trying to make sense of it. This respect for one’s audience is crucial in the liberal arts: only through genuine discussion and reflection can the various parties involved come to deeper knowledge and understanding.

In short, through the construction of an argument, clear premises, anticipation of objections, an understanding of philosophical underpinnings, detailed evidence, and a tone of respect, the *Declaration of Independence* serves as a model of liberal arts education. If all members

of the world society – or even the American community – could make arguments with this degree of eloquence and succinctness, there would be no talk of citizenless democracies.

## Wye Faculty Seminar Memories

By Lucille Sansing, PhD\*

For over 20 years, I had the privilege and pleasure of participating in the Wye Faculty Seminar, first as a participant, and then for several years as a moderator.

As a moderator, I experienced vastly different conversations on the texts due to the variety of disciplines and life experiences participants brought to the discussion. Each seminar was stimulating and memorable.

However, what I looked forward to most during the week was the presentation of *Antigone*, where moderators were the audience, rather than cast members. Over the years, I have seen *Antigone* presented as shadows within Plato's *Caves*; *Antigone* as Dr. Seuss' *Cat in the Hat*, *Antigone* performed by "Valley Girls." I once had a seminar of Canadians who refused to put on the play, but did agree to do a reading fueled with plenty of wine. It was one of the most animated "productions" I witnessed.

But most memorable was a production of *Antigone* that combined two seminars at Wye at the same time: a faculty seminar and a seminar comprised of student affairs administrators. (The Wye seminars with student affairs administrators ran for three or so years, and then ran out of potential participants.)

Now, if you draw upon standard cliches of campus life, one thing you hear is that there is not great rapport between faculty and student services. As the cliche goes, faculty are the intellectual standard bearers; student service personnel are not.

As it turned out in this selection of student service personnel, most held doctorates and most had extensive collegiate teaching experience. However, these pedigrees did not make them immune from the cliche.

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The two groups started meeting at the beginning of the week to select a director, a strategy for the play, to choose cast members, and then begin rehearsals. Nothing worked from the beginning: no consensus about a single element of the play. So the two groups worked in parallel universes: two of every character and two different plays. But true to campus hierarchy, the student affairs play and cast was depicted as “other.” So, for instance, there was Creon and “the other Creon.”

Come the night of the productions, the moderators witnessed two plays: *Antigone* and the other *Antigone*. The staging was pretty chaotic as the scenes threaded back and forth between the two casts.

What made this production memorable was not the quality of the play, but rather the metaphor of faculty vs. student affairs played out before us. Later in the summer, one of the student service seminarians wrote a brilliant piece of this experience as metaphor. This memory sticks with me as I work as a university administrator who tries to unite all constituencies of a university toward the goal of what is best for our students.

I have wonderful memories of Wye: sunsets over the river; friendships with fellow moderators (Rich Gillin, David Townsend, Scott Colley to name a few), wonderful blue crab feasts, unwavering hospitality from Charlene Costello, great colleagues on the Wye Faculty Board.

The Wye Faculty Seminar was a brilliant idea of two educators, Doug Cater and Si Bunting, and this legacy lives on in the experiences that hundreds of seminarians have taken back to their campuses.

I have been privileged to have shared these experiences.

## **“[A]ll Men would be tyrants if they could”: Talking through issues of sexual discrimination at the Wye Deans’ Seminar**

By Leona A. Sevick, PhD\*

Like my colleagues, I approached the Wye River Deans’ Seminar weekend anticipating a much needed break from the usual activities that occupy me day after day. Indeed, what faculty-turned-administrator would not embrace the opportunity to study texts and discuss them in the company of bright, like-trained professionals who are engaged in the same difficult and important work?

Still, I was surprised during those few days to find myself reminded of a fact that I thought I would never lose sight of: women are undervalued, harrassed, and underrepresented in leadership positions on college campuses every day. Emboldened by safe company and prompted by readings like the letters of Abigail Adams to her husband, the Seneca Falls Declaration, and the essay by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, we engaged in intensely personal discussions about women’s issues at the 2011 Wye Deans’ seminar, and the experience was for me an invaluable one.

Like many of us, I have worked on college campuses for my entire professional career. I would like to think that women who do not talk about their experiences with harassment and abuse in colleges have never experienced it, but I know that it is not true. In fact, I have yet to meet a professional woman from any sector who tells me she has never experienced some degree of sexual harassment.

My first experience with sexual harassment came several years before I entered college. In high school I worked as a waitress in a local, family-owned restaurant that was frequented by the rural men’s clubs and

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charitable organizations in our small town. I worked for good, loving people who tried to shield me from the worst of the comments, leers, and touching that all of the women who worked there were subjected to. Naively, I used to think that things would be different in college--that these behaviors somehow sprang from provincial ignorance and that professionals would not engage in intimidation and harassment. But when I was a freshman, one of my professors--a man I admired as a teacher and scholar--asked me to stay after class. I thought he wanted to talk with me about my exam performance; he'd announced already that my score was the highest in the class. Instead, he sat on the edge of his desk and described (in detail and for twenty minutes) how much I looked like a female film actor he admired. Even then I knew that he was testing the waters and gauging my response. I inched my way around the desks to the door and slipped out as quickly as possible, my face burning with embarrassment and shame. Back in my dorm room, I fished my exam out of my backpack and scoured it for evidence of unearned points, doubting my knowledge and skills. The next day I dropped my minor and never raised my hand in that class again, and of course I told no one what happened.

There are other examples I might offer: a seminar professor who regularly pressed his front against my back while he lectured behind my chair; the college administrator who invited me to a board dinner and introduced me to every male trustee as "this gorgeous creature"; undergraduate students who felt entitled to touch me or wink at me when I was a graduate assistant. I offer these illustrations not because I think that they are particularly egregious. Many of my women colleagues have suffered far worse harassment and abuse, resulting in loss of jobs, promotion and reputation. I offer these examples because I have never shared them with anyone other than very close friends, and my experience at the Wye seminar reminded me that no matter how difficult it is for women to talk about their experiences, not talking about them can lead to complacency and blindness. In the course of a discussion at the Deans' seminar, one brave colleague offered her own painful experience with sexual harassment, and I remembered thinking, "I wish I were that brave." No matter how supportive an environ-

ment we find ourselves in, sharing personal examples of harassment is difficult.

Each fall I teach an interdisciplinary course called *The American Experience*, and I include in my syllabus readings of the letters of Abigail Adams to her husband along with the Seneca Falls Declaration. We read these texts alongside other works that speak to America's founding as a nation, including *The Coquette* (1793) by Hannah Foster. This fictionalized history of the life of Elizabeth Whitman addresses the sexual double standards and gender inequality that appear in Adams' letters and in the Declaration, offering a stark contrast to the freedom rhetoric of the founding fathers. Our discussion eventually turns to the ways that double standards still exist in American society, and on occasion students will offer their own examples or observations of gender inequality and abuse--some of which occur on our own campus. I make a point to thank students for their honesty and strength in confronting these issues through dialogue. Being a lightning rod for women who are struggling with harassment is difficult at times, but it is important for young women to know that there are professors and administrators who are willing to listen respectfully and with deep attention and care. Our words and actions in the classroom and outside of it make spaces for these conversations.

In *The Caged Virgin*, Hirsi Ali comments on the ways that fear prevents people from criticizing what they see as wrong. She calls for open dialogue in the face of this criticism and intimidation, in particular citing women as victims of any culture that supports its patriarchal systems. It is, I believe, the same culture of fear that allows Indian legislators and police to tolerate gang rapes of women who ride on public buses. Critical dialogue needs to take place in the college classroom--an environment that should feel as safe and open as the Wye seminar in 2011. As teachers, it's our responsibility to engage students in discussions about texts that speak to critical, uncomfortable issues in contemporary society. In the words of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, we must always "maintain and proclaim our core values of free and open debate."

I thank the seminar and my fine colleagues for this opportunity.

## Rethinking John Wayne in Light of Rosa Parks: Teaching Films to Inspire Leaders

By Heather Weibel Tullio, MFA\*

When I began reading the assigned articles for the Wye Faculty Seminar, I noted that many of them were about early American history and I wondered whether this experience would be relevant to my teaching. Over time, I came to realize that the readings and discussions were likely to influence my teaching in ways that surprised me.

While we discussed the readings, our moderator, Todd Breyfogle, often encouraged us to connect the material to our own careers as educators. At the beginning of the week, I was thinking about education, but in regard to the conduct in *other people's* classrooms: I wrote in the margins of Martin Luther Kings Jr.' "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" – and *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, "All American high school students should read this – do they?"

The mission statement of Franklin Pierce University, where I teach, states, "We prepare students to become confident, knowledgeable individuals and leaders of conscience." William Deresiewicz's address to West Point students, *Solitude and Leadership*, provides some guidance on how to develop leaders. In it, he discusses the book *Heart of Darkness*, noting that "Marlow believes in the need to find yourself... and the way to do it, he says, is work, solitary work. Concentration (Deresiewicz, 1)." Through hard work at the Wye Seminar, participants' leadership skills are strengthened, then those faculty return to their own campuses to guide and mentor their students.

Deresiewicz continues, "Introspection means talking to yourself, and one of the best ways of talking to yourself is by talking to another person... Doubts you aren't supposed to have, questions you aren't supposed to

ask...This is what we call thinking out loud, discovering what you believe in the course of articulating it (ibid)." The Wye Seminar allows faculty the opportunity to think out loud amongst a diverse group of colleagues, and allows each of us to apply our unique conclusions to our own teaching.

Some of the readings I found most influential were those written by female and black writers. These included *I Stand Here Ironing* about a single mom reflecting on being an imperfect mother and *Invisible Man* about black male identity in America. In the article "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism", Martha Nussbaum compellingly argues the benefits of teaching students that they are "citizens of the world," rather than Americans. As the week's discussions continued, I came to realize that I do not have control over what American high school students are required to read, but I do have control over the readings and film screenings assigned in my own classes.

When I first taught Understanding Film, I focused the course on classical American cinema. I showed Charlie Chaplin comedies, James Dean melodramas, and John Wayne westerns. Most of the films focused on the white male experience in America, as expressed by white male actors and auteurs. I felt an obligation to teach my students the same white male canon I had been taught. Telling myself that, "My students need to know these names so they can confidently participate in conversations with film studies graduates from other colleges who have learned the same canon."

Now when I teach Understanding Film, I include more films that present female, black, and international perspectives. Some of the films I now screen include:

- *The Rosa Parks Story*: Parks struggles for equality and suffrage during the Civil Rights Movement.
- *Temple Grandin*: An autistic woman sees things from cows' point of views and dramatically re-designs slaughterhouses.
- *The Help*: A white woman collects the stories of maids in the 1960s south.
- *Run Lola Run*: A woman tries desperately to help her boyfriend regain the 100,000 Deutschmarks he lost. (Set in

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Germany.)

- *Slumdog Millionaire*: A man tells the police his story of growing up in the slums, to justify how he knew all the right answers on a game show. (Set in India.)
- *Invictus*: (Nelson Mandela leads South Africa and encourages the national rugby team to win, in hopes of strengthening national pride and unity. (Set in South Africa.)

These films expose my students to diverse perspectives, but they are also examples of great filmmaking. Our class' analytical discussions can still be focused around filmmaking techniques, including cinematography, genre, and character development.

Film and literature have the power to take us somewhere we have never been and allow us to spend several hours walking in someone else's shoes. I hope watching films that demonstrate diverse perspectives will give my students more openness and understanding of the struggles women and people of color have gone through to work towards equality. If I can help my students to better understand the perspectives of "the other," this may also benefit them when they communicate with their co-workers, friends, neighbors, partner, and children.

Deresiewicz describes David Petraeus as a modern military leader, "What makes him a thinker—and a leader—is precisely that he is able to think things through for himself...He has the confidence, *the courage*, to argue for his ideas even when they aren't popular... Courage: there is physical courage... and then there is another kind of courage, moral courage, the courage to stand up for what you believe...(ibid)."

The films that I screen feature protagonists who display honesty, forgiveness, and persistence in the face of adversity. The main characters show great personal courage as they work hard to achieve their individual goals. Students can be inspired by these role models (several are based on real people), as they consider their path to becoming leaders themselves.

Following my residency at the Wye Seminar, when I design and revise my courses, I now tell myself a new and different story. I want my classes to help mold my students into more aware, more thoughtful, more empathetic human beings. Strengthening my students' understanding

of others is a nobler goal than improving their ability to discuss John Wayne around the water cooler.

"True leadership means being able to think for yourself and act on your convictions (ibid)." The Wye Faculty Seminar helped me clarify several important goals to incorporate in my teaching. I discovered that I want to teach my students to become better human beings, and my time at the Wye Seminar gave me the confidence to actively pursue those goals.

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## Healing and Creating

By William J. Zanardi, PhD\*

Professor Richard Gillin served as the moderator for the Wye River Seminar I attended in July 2003. His masterful posing of questions about the seminar readings on the theme of citizenship in America altered my own teaching style. The range of readings from Aristotle to Studs Terkel provided our diverse seminar group with something for everyone. In my case, a recent interest in questions about economics and liberty gained new focus because of the readings and discussions. In the years since I have annually taught an Honors Seminar at St. Edward's University on ethics and economics. A few published articles and then a book, *A Theory of Ordered Liberty* (2010) grew out of those seminar days.

I almost did not make the trip to Wye. Two weeks before the seminar began my mother died, and officials at my university were supportive of whatever decision I made about attending. I flew east with my colleague, Professor Diane Hill, and was glad of the decision. The instant friendliness of the Wye staff, the quickly developed rapport among the seminar participants and the beautiful surroundings offered some comfort and distraction. I recall using one of the available bikes for a ride around the countryside. Turning a corner outside the woods, I came upon a large field of sunflowers bowing to the afternoon sun. The sudden beauty of the moment began my climb back to some degree of emotional balance. Quiet walks along the water and the boat ride into Annapolis to visit the Naval Academy were other memorable experiences of renewal.

So the Wye River Seminar was both intellectually and emotionally effective in shaping my life these past few years. My gratitude to all those who made those days possible, and my congratulations to those who have provided such experiences to so many others for the past thirty years.

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