

Sociology Department Newsletter

Newsletter for the Alumni and Friends of the Department of Sociology, Grinnell College - Spring 2008

GRINNELL COLLEGE



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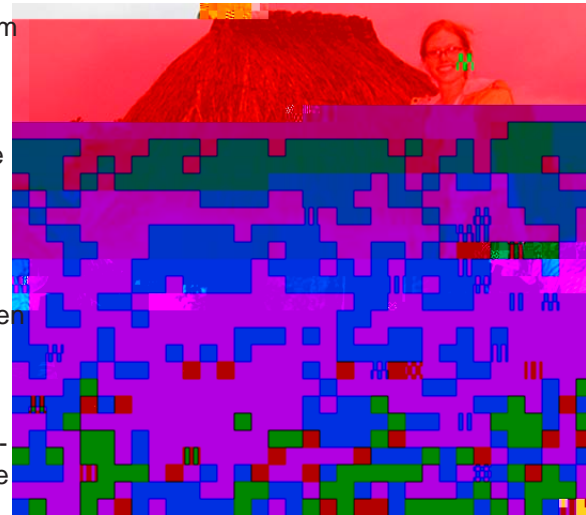
Volume 6

by Keli Campbell '05

I had been living in Zambia in the Peace Corps for almost a year when I had my first family member visit me in my village. To see my home and life through the eyes of someone fresh off the plane from a first world country made me realize how settled I was in my little mud hut. I am quite comfortable with candlelight, cooking over a fire, and using a pit latrine. Carting water in jugs to my house is a chore but no longer a burden. Whatever inconveniences exist are a fair trade for living in wild untamed beauty, riding my bike through the bush, and building relationships with people with only a handful of mutually understood words between us. People often focus on the rustic living, but that soon becomes more of a joy than a challenge. The real challenge of the Peace Corps, the unending process, is trying to spend these two years as an asset to my community. How do I address and try to alleviate any of the myriad of troubles that face a rural Zambian subsistence farmer?

When my training group first arrived in Zambia we were told that the three goals of Peace Corps are: 1) to train men and women in your host country, 2)

themselves as husbands and wives, men and women, nor consider how people culturally approach death or their ability to alter death's course. It can be argued, is argued, even within my own internal debates, that this understanding gap makes development work mostly a lost cause.



But as an owner of a sociology degree, I remind myself and others that some level of understanding is possible, it just takes a lot more work to suspend your assumptions, ask a lot of questions, and listen to what people tell you about their own lives. I have found that sociological thinking always helps to interpret the complexities of why people make the decisions they do, but now working as a foreigner in a foreign context, it also helps me to remember that my point of view is not a center point but just one point among many.

It may be impossible to step out of your own context and enter another, but it is possible to enter into the conversation believing that both parties are valid, that the exchange is even. The beauty of a framework of exchange is that I enter the conversation not as a lecturer but as one more person with suggestions and ideas. Just as my contribution is anywhere, in my village my contribution is merely my participation, whether my suggestions and questions be used, dropped, or spark a better more appropriate idea. I believe that sustainable development is about helping people articulate and then accomplish the vision they already have for themselves and their community. I cannot bring anything except my part of the conversation, not offered as what should happen, but as simply another building block in the evolution of ideas.

Economic Development in Central Appalachia

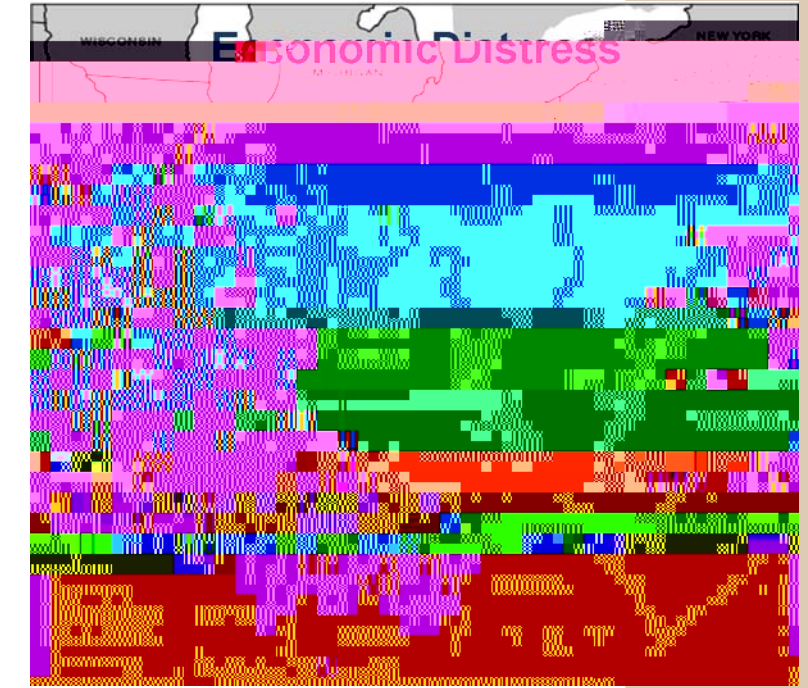
by Melissa Fry Konty '95

Melissa Fry Konty earned a Master's degree in Sociology from the University of Memphis Center for Research on Women in 1997 and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Arizona in 2005. After two years as a professor at Auburn Univer

mountain top removal is the process of allowing the tops of mountains to be easily access the coal seams that lie beneath. The practice involves stripping mountains of vegetation and wildlife (literally scraping them raw) and exploding the rock beneath,



Economic Development in Central Appalachia



Editor's Note: For more information, visit www.maced.org. Additional resources on mountaintop removal can be found at www.kftc.org and www.ilovemountains.org



Faculty Spotlight

David Cook-Martín

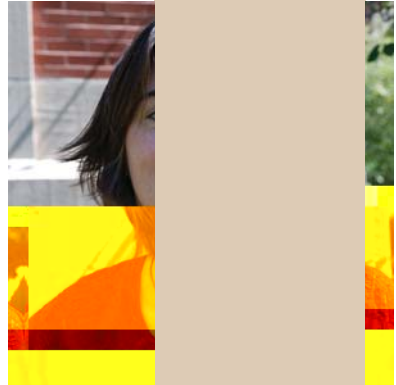
David Cook-Martín (Ph.D., UCLA) joined the Sociology Department in the summer of 2007. He teaches Introduction to Sociology, International Migration, Research Methods, Citizenship Matters, and Racial, Ethnic and National Formations. He is a former Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Latin American Sociology Mellon (UCLA) and National Science Foundation postdoctoral fellow (UC Irvine). David is a political sociologist whose work on migration and nationality policies in Latin America and Europe has been published in the *Journal of Historical Sociology*, the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, and *Citizenship Studies*. He also has published chapters on transnational religious networks, ethnic return migration, and Latin American migrations to Spain. He is currently completing a book entitled *The Elusive Citizen: Statecraft and Belonging in Argentina, Italy, and Spain*. He is involved in a major collaborative project entitled *Race, Immigration and Citizenship in the Americas (RICA)* that studies the links between political liberalism and racialized preferences in the immigration and nationality laws of 22 countries in the Americas since 1850. At Grinnell, David serves as a member of the College's Center for International Studies Advisory Board.

So that's his formal piece. What makes this guy get up the morning, besides his two kids and a dog? Simply put, he's curious about what makes the social world tick and especially about the unequal relations that characterize most of its domains. How do people and institutions get their way or exercise power? What are the consequences of the exercise of power? He examines these questions through the prism of international migration and citizenship because changes in political jurisdiction and country membership often lay bare

Kesho Scott- This has been a strange and productive year for me. Strange, in that I was full of energy and remained that way until the last day of class. My Tutorial: "Black Men in Higher Education" debated the "endangered species" theory applicability in the 21st century, and teaching "Race and Ethnicity" had a more expansive set of discussions about being "raced" white and "doing white ethnicity" as a segue way to discussions about privilege, capitalism, and globalization. In the "Social Movements" course students dissected the strengths and weakness of the Green Revolution, new strategies for the Social Justice and Environmentalism movements as well as the new challenges of linking sociology to the study of popular culture. My 24 interviews on the "habits of survival" of African American male graduates from Grinnell College, 1950-2005 is now complete. I am sifting through the themes that will make this work *one* and



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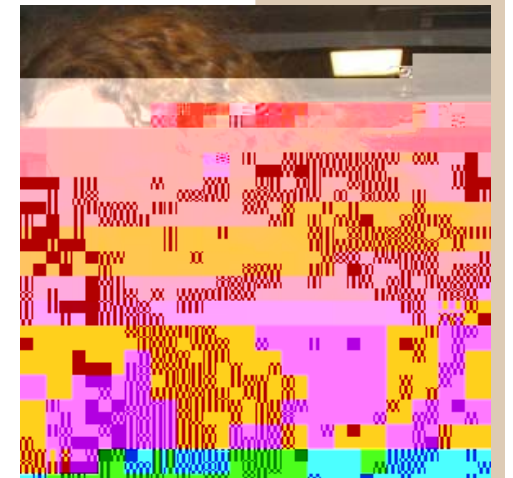
Mentored Advanced Projects (MAPS)

by Sarah Fowler '08

During my semester abroad in Ecuador, it seemed like everyone I met had a family member living in Spain. The phenomenon struck close to home when my own host parents began to plan their move to Spain, and I witnessed the tight and tearful conversations between them and my host siblings. Keeping in mind that I needed to choose a topic



Other Mentored Advanced Projects (MAPS)



Tributes to John H. Burma (1913-2006) ---

---Raymond Rymph '57

John would have loved the students of today with their involvement with women and minorities in the "real world". Did you know, by the way, that his second wife had to resign her faculty position at Grinnell College when she married John? Also, that Grinnell denied admission to the daughter of the very distinguished sociologist Donald Cowgill (a close friend of John's) because she was epileptic. Times have changed!

---Murry Nelson '69

I was a sociology major and Ben Nefzger was my adviser, but John Burma provided a lot of the insight and inspiration for my later academic success. His strength in Hispanic groups and their integration into American society was a revelation to me and that, along with interest in other under-represented minorities, led to my focus on those groups as my academic interest area. My senior thesis/project work focused on societal exploitation of homosexuals, something that was difficult to pursue because of the lack of information available at the time. My biggest source of research material in 1968 was the Playboy Library in Chicago. Despite the nature of the work and A (researched minademnd)]Ttime. MidwurceSgist Donc T* (exploitAsal)of hommeeshed68 was 968 wOmaha,hat, J T*(the veroo)]Tell deniedcaBen Nedd anaturee

