

2019

2019 Year in Review: Letter from the Director

Leonard and Shirley Goldstein Center for Human Rights - University of Nebraska at Omaha

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2019 – YEAR IN REVIEW

Letter from the Executive Director

New Year's Eve 2019 marks the end of the second year of the new Leonard and Shirley Goldstein Center for Human Rights at the University of Nebraska at Omaha – and what a year! Housed in the UNO College of Arts and Sciences as a result of a long partnership between the Religious Studies program and the family of Leonard and Shirley Goldstein, the Goldstein Center not only grew rapidly but successfully took upon projects and programs with local, regional, national, and international impact.

With the help of our new Project and Design Manager, Angela Brown, the Center Director and Assistant Director together with a very active Executive Committee catalyzed a core group of affiliated faculty members to engage issues related to human rights across the greater UNO campus. Partnerships with faculty, departments, and programs from four Colleges extended the Center's reach across Dodge and Scott campuses. These include work with affiliated faculty from UNO Religious Studies, Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology, English, History, Foreign Languages, Women and Gender Studies, Black Studies, Native American Studies, the Office of Latino and Latin American Studies, Art History, Gerontology, and Information Systems and Quantitative Analysis. The Center during 2019, in addition to organizing with the Religious Studies program two Goldstein Lectures (Masha Gessen and the Honorable Richard Goldstone), co-sponsored with the History department the Missouri Valley History Conference and John Trudell Distinguished Lecture in Native American Studies (Walter Echo-Hawk) and Richard Dean Winchell Lecture (Vine Deloria, Jr.) as well as the European Studies Conference keynote (Courtney Hillebrecht). In conjunction with the Goldstein Family Community Chair in Human Rights, Laura Alexander, a recurring Human Rights Forum was established where Center affiliated faculty share their various types of expertise with students. As a result of these initiatives, student interest has grown rapidly as measured by thirty new Human Rights Studies minors and counting.

The banner accomplishment of the Goldstein Center during 2019 was the completion of a two year project dedicated to the creation of an exhibition and archive, in conjunction with the UNO Criss Library, publicizing Shirley Goldstein's Immigration Rights Legacy (Curator: Jeannette Gabriel). In addition to exposing UNO students to Shirley Goldstein's life work promoting freedom of movement and religion for Soviet Jews during the 1970s and 1980s, the exhibition provided a stage for academic talks and panels describing whistleblowing technologies "now and then," highlighting the stories of immigrants to the USA, and remembering the Fall of the Berlin Wall. Over the course of the year, the Goldstein Center's Executive Committee – on the recommendation of affiliated faculty-run Standing Committees focused on Curriculum, Research, and Community Engagement – funded several other undertakings. These included five different projects related to refugee and migration studies including an exhibition, film, and talk on the work of American Women rebuilding France, 1917-1924 held at Kaneko (Jody Neathery Castro), a

refugee simulation project (Lana Obradovic), an exploratory analysis of refugee resettlement and community services in Nebraska and refugee-related initiatives in the NU system (Laura Alexander and Cristián Doña-Reveco), a project to build an app to support access to services for refugees and immigrants to Nebraska (Deepak Khazanchi), and a research project focusing on refugee reactions to new Trump administration policies (Alecia Anderson). Partnering with the Goldstein Family Community Chair for Human Rights, the Goldstein Center also launched a highly successful initiative at the American Academy of Religion on religion and human rights. The Goldstein Center continued its support for the UNO academic journal of world affairs, *ID: International Dialogue* (Rory Conces). In keeping with our goal of reaching international audiences, we decided to support a new online UNO based publication titled *Siyasa* which focuses on human rights and the Middle East (Ramazan Kilinc).

Last but certainly not least, over the past year the Goldstein Center engaged in three high profile collaborations with the UNO Sam and Frances Fried Holocaust and Genocide Academy and its Executive Director Mark Celinscak. First, the Goldstein Center in March sponsored a workshop primarily for high school teachers across Nebraska in connection with the visit to UNO of Father Patrick Desbois and his Holocaust by Bullets program. In September, the Goldstein Center held a Symposium on Art and Human Rights during the visit of the artist Samuel Bak and a breathtaking exhibition of his art to campus. This academic meeting featured scholars from across the United States, Europe, and South Africa. In December, the Fried Academy and Goldstein Center hosted the biannual meeting of a newly founded National Consortium for Directors of Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Centers.

There are so many people that I need to thank who have made 2019 an exceptional second year for the Goldstein Center. We continue to receive energetic support from the Goldstein family, specifically Leonard and Shirley's children – Don, Gail, and Kathy. The Dean of the UNO College of Arts and Science, David Boocker, has continually provided guidance and advocated on our behalf. We especially want to express our thanks to the Dean of the UNO Criss Library, David Richards, for agreeing to host the Shirley Goldstein Immigration Rights Legacy exhibition for three months. None of the above would be possible without the labor of our Goldstein Center Executive Committee: Paul Williams (Assistant Director), Rory Conces (Curriculum Committee Chair), Alecia Anderson and Brett Kyle (Research Committee co-Chairs), Jay Irwin and Martina Saltamacchia (Community Engagement co-Chairs), Lana Obradovic, Troy Romero, Michele Desmarais, Mark Celinscak, and Laura Alexander.

I wish each of you the best in the New Year! There is so much more to come.

Curtis

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