

CIRCLE Fellowship Program 2014-2015



Each year CIRCLE welcomes a cohort of new fellows who are knowledgeable and articulate about their own religious tradition and interested in developing interreligious leadership skills. These fellows apply to the program in pairs and work collaboratively to organize inter-religious learning opportunities. Groups focus on shared study, shared reflection, and/or collaborative civic action. For more details visit CIRCLE's website: www.circleleadership.org

2014-2015 Fellowship Pairs and Projects

1. Shehla Zakaullah and Elisha Herb explore spiritual responses to the environmental crisis through their monthly peer group called, "Engage in the Life of the World."
2. Basma Emam and Lauren Seganos lead a peer group focused on text study to explore notions of the "Religious Other in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Scriptures."
3. Elizabeth Dann and Miriam Grossman lead a peer group focused on interfaith models for Social Justice and Advocacy work.
4. Kyoko Hamamoto and Kazunori Hamamoto lead a peer group focused on interfaith marriage and interfaith families.
5. José Portuondo-Dember and Natasha Baloch, in cooperation with the Boston-based Partakers program, lead a peer group focused on Prison Justice & Ministry that includes both visits with people who are incarcerated and working on their GEDs, as well as time for reflection as a group.
6. Mish Clebaner and Mitul Daiyan host a series of gatherings focused around a meal to talk about both physical and spiritual hunger, called, "Handling Hunger: Sustaining Healthful Communities."

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Misha Clebaner is a second year student at Hebrew College. Misha has served with AmeriCorps and with American Jewish World Service (AJWS) in India through the World Partners Fellowship. While at Emory, he studied at the Hebrew University and interned with Rabbis for Human Rights. He also spent a year studying Talmud/Torah at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Mitul Daiyan is a practicing Muslimah who is studying faith-based community organizing as a master's degree candidate at Harvard Divinity School. Raised in New York City, Mitul has worked with a variety of youth groups at local mosques to help create safe spaces for empowerment, compassion, and spiritual growth.

Elizabeth Dann holds a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center and a B.A. from Amherst College. She focused her legal studies on national security and anti-terror government initiatives post-9/11. Prior to attending law school, she was the Outreach Director at New England's largest mosque, in charge of community education and interfaith relationships. As a member of an interfaith family, is passionate about interfaith work

Basma Emam is a PhD student at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. She also holds a masters and bachelors degree from the Al-Azhar in Hebrew Language and Literature. Her research concerns the perceptions of Arab and Muslim women in Hebrew language discourse. She has a background in Islamic education that includes close study of Islamic intellectual history including Qur'an, Hadith, interpretation, and jurisprudence.

Miriam Grossman is currently in her first year of rabbinical school at Hebrew College. A Jewish educator and community organizer, Miriam taught at the Jewish Enrichment Center, a pluralistic children's program, combining arts-based exploration with traditional Jewish study. A Co-founder of Jewish Solidarity and Action for Schools, from 2012-2014, Miriam mobilized Jewish people across Chicago to join low-income communities in the fight for education justice.

Kazunori Hamamoto is a doctoral student at the Theology School of Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan. After obtaining a B.A. in jurisprudence from Kyoto University, he became interested in the role that religions play in law and ethics, studied Christianity and Islam, embracing the latter, and received an M.A. from Doshisha University. He is also a member of Japan Muslim Association and a cooperative researcher for the program "Shariah and Modernity" at the Oriental Library in Tokyo.

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Kyoko Hamamoto holds a Masters of Theological Studies and a BA degree from Doshisha University School of Theology, in Kyoto Japan and an MA in Psychology and Religion from Andover Newton Theological School. Kyoko returned to Andover Newton for the DMin. program. She is an ordained of UCC in Japan and BCC. For the past fifteen years, she has been involved in pioneering work of healthcare chaplaincy in Japan alongside those who are Buddhist, Shinto, Muslim and Christian.

Eli Herb is a fourth year rabbinical student and holds a BFA in Contemporary Music as well as an MA from Iliff School of Theology. Previously Eli managed the Canyon Country Youth Corps in Monticello, Utah. Working primarily with Native Americans from the Navajo, Zuni, Acoma, Hopi and Ute tribes, Eli mentored, and supervised work crews that completed large conservation projects on public lands. Eli is an ordained maggid, a Jewish spiritual storyteller.

José Portunondo-Dember received his J.D. from Boston College Law School and Bachelors from the University of Chicago. During his law school career, he was an advocate with the Massachusetts Transgender Legal Advocates (MTLA). José was baptized Catholic as a child, and has since returned to the Judaism of his ancestors that came to Puerto Rico and Cuba in the wake of the Inquisition. An M.Div. candidate at ANTS, José is interested in the needs of people with connections to multiple religious traditions.

Lauren Seganos holds a BA in Communication and Religious Studies from Juniata College in Pennsylvania and is an M.Div. candidate at ANTS. She is a licensed minister in the Church of the Brethren. Lauren served two years in AmeriCorps at her alma mater as the first Interfaith Service Coordinator, designing and organizing an interfaith engagement and service initiative for college students as part of the President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge.

Shehla Zakaullah is a graduate student at Boston University in Energy & Environmental Analysis and a research assistant in the Landscape Analysis for Ecosystem Services project sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation Conservation and Sustainable Development program and Boston University. Shehla has worked for United Nations High Commission for Refugees, as a photojournalist for the Houston Chronicle, and as Executive Director of a cultural nonprofit. A Pakistani-American Muslim, she holds a BA degree in political science from the University of Peshawar in Pakistan.

Natasha Baloch is a Master of Arts candidate in Applied Economics at University of Massachusetts, Boston. She received her bachelors from St. Mary's University in Economics and Criminology. Natasha is interested in the role of various alternates to the prison system that address the root causes of crime including crime prevention through social development, restorative justice models and the role of community organizations in preventing crime.