

PROFILES OF '05 GRADUATES

CALLISTA BROWN ISABELLE '05 M.DIV.

Callista Brown Isabelle grew up on a farm in rural Iowa, and found her way to Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. Toward the end of college, she entered the candidacy process of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



Before going to seminary, she served for two years at Holden Village, an ecumenical retreat center, rooted in the Lutheran tradition. Reachable only by boat, this remote mountain village in Washington is where she discerned her decision to attend Yale Divinity School. She was drawn

to study in an ecumenical environment with rigorous academics. She grew to love YDS and New Haven, and made them home. Marquand Chapel was a place of theological stretching, as well as the place where she found nourishment to make it through another week.

Callista leaves YDS to begin her Lutheran internship year, returning to Gustavus Adolphus College to serve as Vicar in the Chaplains' Office. She continues on the path to ordination in the ELCA, with particular interests in college chaplaincy and outdoor ministries.

SHIRLE MOONE CHILDS '05 M.DIV.

Shirle Moone Childs is a native New Yorker and a life-long Methodist in the tradition of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. At the time she started classes at YDS, she was working fulltime as an early childhood education consultant for the Connecticut State Department of Education. When Shirle returned from Ghana after a travel seminar with eleven other YDS students in 2004, she started a non-profit corporation, GBOA, Inc. (God's Bridge Over the Atlantic). Her work in the village includes training and teaching young women in the areas of child development; early literacy and numeracy; health; and vocational skill improvement, including textiles, beading, weaving, and agriculture. Her vision also is to build a Family Resource Center where training will take place and where doctors and nurse practitioners will see patients; to open a child care center; and to start a full-



day kindergarten for young children in the village. She will also be engaged in a teaching ministry at her local church, including a noonday Bible study.

WILLIAM NG '05 M.A.R.

William's immediate plan after graduation is to return to his Franciscan community of Friars Minor in Hong Kong, assuming a new role as the novice director. As a formator for novices in religious life, he sees his YDS education as influential because, as he puts it, Franciscan spirituality can be said to be a creative quest for human and natural beauty and harmony. Hence, his exploration of religion and the arts was tremendously relevant to the formation of new friars.



He sees that encountering the arts—either by making art or appreciating it—is a superb path of spirituality and Christian formation. This would have been impossible if he had not been transformed by the studies in religion and the arts at Yale in such an intensely intellectual and challenging environment.

In the future, he would like to continue his journey as a friar in a creative ministry both as a practitioner of making religious art and using it as a form of visual preaching, spiritual care giving, and religious and Christian formation.

LESLIE WOODS '05 M.A.R.

Leslie believes the life of the YDS community, from daily worship services to conversations in the refectory, to her relationships with faculty, staff, and other students have prepared her for a life of service. In her opinion, every minute she has spent on the quad, whether it was used in studying and in researching, or in lounging on the grass with friends on a pretty afternoon, has formed her heart and mind. She leaves with less certainty about her vocation and yet much more certainty about her call from God to serve. In September 2005, Leslie began a yearlong internship position in the UCC Public Life and Social Policy Ministry Team.



PRACTICING PUBLIC LEADERSHIP: A PROGRAM FOR YDS STUDENTS

by Barbara Blodgett '87 M.Div., '00 Ph.D.

Frequently I hear that today's generation of divinity students has lost a sense of passion for social justice that previous generations had. Why aren't divinity students on the picket lines, in the marches, leading the boycotts, people often ask. Where is their concern for the disenfranchised and marginalized of our society? Who among them will become the William Sloane Coffins and Bernice Powell Jacksons of the future? I decided to find out. What I found was a commitment to justice no less keen than in my day, remarkable skills of analysis and inquiry, and a strong desire to find a place among the movements and organizations working toward social change. Students simply needed structure, mentoring, and effective models that they could emulate. Fortunately, we are blessed at YDS and in New Haven with all three.

Two years ago I created a summer program called "Public Leadership in Ministry" which has now run for two consecutive summers. The program is based on theories of leadership drawn from community organizing. In New Haven, Elm City Congregations Organized (ECCO), one of the most compelling examples of religious leadership for social justice in New Haven, operates according to an organizing model that traces its roots to Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation. Now forty congregations strong, it brings together black, white, and Hispanic, Catholic and Protestant, urban and suburban, small churches and large. ECCO has won many victories over the sale of guns, fair labor practices, drug dealing, and community policing, to name a few. I knew that whether or not they ultimately embraced all of the principles of organizing, our students should be familiar with it. I hired ECCO's lead organizer, Patrick Speer, to give us two weeks of lessons in leadership. Speer based these lessons on the training he runs for his members but tailored them to the particular needs and interests of divinity students. Of his experience teaching at YDS, he says, "[the students] are curious, thoughtful, and challenging. While perhaps less interested in the ideological arguments about social change that characterized previous generations, they are more interested than ever before in the mechanics, practical applications, and implications of work for social justice in the life of the church."

In 2005, nine students rose to the challenge of becoming public leaders by interning in public ministry settings for eight weeks after the training. Mary Dansinghani '06 M.Div.

served as a chaplain to patients with acute mental illness in a publicly funded facility, learning to connect with the suffering brought on not only by illness but also by the locked doors, regimented routines, and limited resources. Carmen Germino '07 M.Div., whose setting was an interfaith organization in Danbury, Connecticut, planned a forum on immigration and organized a march in support of undocumented workers threatened with deportation. Dan Cantey '07 M.Div. and Andy Thompson '06 M.A.R., interning at ECCO, helped develop an action led entirely in Spanish with New Haven's chief of police on 911 response times in the largely Hispanic neighborhood of Fair Haven. Travis Scholl '07 M.Div. convened an advocacy group of poor and working class women to fight for legislation in Connecticut's General Assembly ensuring adequate health care. Elaine Baker '07 M.Div. designed and led a workshop on parenting skills for residents of a transitional housing program that served as a pilot for a comprehensive support program for parents of toddlers. Matt Morgan '06 M.A.R. helped to organize a living wage demonstration by workers at Camden Yards Stadium in Baltimore, and later handled logistics for a leadership training institute for poor people's organizations from around the country. San Yi Lin '07 M.Div., working for an eco-justice network of faith communities in Connecticut, helped a group of clergy in Cheshire work toward lobbying their town to buy 20 percent of its energy from "green" sources. Chris Reinish '07 M.Div. led several small group ministries at a clubhouse in New Haven for adults with mental illness and consulted with the staff on their need for more religious programming.

Perhaps the era of the charismatic individual leader has given way to one of organized collectives. YDS can be proud of the leadership skills that have been nurtured in the Public Leadership program. As Andy Thompson commented, "My [internship] has given me a great deal of insight regarding effective community engagement, as well as my own strengths and limitations in terms of public life." Matt Morgan wrote, "I feel like it may have been the best spent and most important ten weeks of my life... I am becoming a spiritual leader, a human rights leader, and a global justice leader. I am becoming a minister and a witness to those who have been victims of oppression in this society. I believe God has called me to this type of work, and I have grown stronger and more dedicated to these causes because of this internship."