Graduation Class: May 2016

Mustafa Hmood is a History major with a minor in Political Science at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, Tennessee. He has distinguished himself in the classroom and as a member of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society. He is also a recipient of the CBU Lasallian Fellowship, presented each year to five members of the senior class based upon their scholarship, leadership and service.

Each student is nominated because of academic excellence, commitment to social justice, the active nature of his/her faith, and an inspired approach to change-making. Upon graduation, each Fellow is awarded $10,000.

Mustafa has been a very friendly face for incoming international students, assisting with their transition to CBU. He has been willing to share his story of struggle as an Iraqi refugee to educate, encourage, and serve others. With the recent influx of Kuwaiti students to campus, Mustafa immediately saw the importance of establishing the Muslim Student Association, a group focused on meeting the needs of all Muslims on campus.

Riyam Al-Karkokily will graduate from Regis University in Denver, Colorado, with a major in Accounting. She writes: “I found my home away from home at Regis University, which has proven a perfect match for my personality and interests.

“Regis University’s focus on community, serving others, and pursuing a life of purpose has forever impacted my life. In addition, the institution’s liberal arts program has allowed me to take classes in subjects I never knew I would love. Regis University also offers a beautiful landscape and a view of the Rocky Mountains which always made my day!”

After being nominated by her professors, Riyam was awarded the 2016 Outstanding Woman of Accounting and Finance. She has been taking master classes at Regis during her undergraduate years and expects to finish her Masters Degree by December.
Rand Zalzala will graduate from Oberlin College with a major in Architecture and a minor in Art History. Among her many achievements, Rand is a Bonner Scholar. The Bonner Program provides a scholarship to students in exchange for weekly commitment to service with a local community organization. In addition, Bonner students engage in trainings on leadership development and social justice topics. Rand wasted no time putting theory into practice. Her efforts on behalf of a fellow Iraqi student resulted in a full scholarship to Oberlin—a classic example of “paying it forward.”

Of her experience at Oberlin, Rand says, “My experience has been great, especially with declaring an independent major in architecture and having different work experiences in the field.” She plans to seek employment for a year and continue the challenging process of applying to graduate programs.

Ahmed Al-Dulaimi is set to graduate cum laude from Fontbonne University with a major in Global Studies and a minor in Business Administration. Studying at Fontbonne was an important turning point in his career. Ahmed writes, “I started off by studying biology as a major, but in my sophomore year I had the notion of studying something that would relate to my own personal story. Being an international student from Iraq, I chose global studies because I want to be a bridge between my culture and civilization and the culture of the United States—and, indeed, the rest of the world.”

At the end of his junior year Ahmed was presented with a Certificate of Academic Excellence in Global Studies in recognition of outstanding achievement in the Department of History, Philosophy, and Religion. After graduation Ahmed will join his family in Canada, where they have been resettled.

Taleen Al-Dilanyan will complete her studies at Smith College cum laude with a major in Chemistry and a minor in Italian.

About her experience at Smith, Taleen writes, “I feel extremely blessed to have had the opportunity to earn my degree at Smith College. Not only is it a nurturing and stimulating environment, but it also allowed me to make wonderful and meaningful connections. During my time at Smith, my ISP support group was my second family. These four years have truly been exciting and memorable!”

Taleen plans to work for a couple of years before entering a Ph.D. program in chemistry.

Awss Dabe will graduate with a degree in Aviation Administration from Lewis University, one of the most respected aviation schools in the entire nation. Awss writes: “They always say that your school is your second home. At Lewis, one can certainly feel that. The student body is very welcoming and friendly, the Lasallian Brothers never failed to show their love and support for us, and the excellent faculty has nourished us and helped us learn. Lewis truly has been a home for me, and I have been blessed with this experience.”

After graduation, Awss hopes to find employment for a few years and then pursue a masters degree and/or other Aviation licenses and certificates.
May 27-30, 2016 - ISP Reunion: Coming Together to “Pay it Forward” The reunion goal is to reunite the ISP students/alumni and those who have supported them. Who better than a strong network of bright young Iraqi professionals could address the challenges faced by war-displaced refugees around the globe?

Helena Cobban: Keynote Speaker. Helena is a writer and researcher on international relations, with special interests in the Middle East, the international system, and transitional justice. In March 2010, she founded a new book-publishing company, Just World Publishing, LLC. By September 2012 its principal imprint, Just World Books, had published twelve titles on current foreign-policy issues.

Born in Abingdon, England, she was educated at Queen Anne's School, Caversham and St Hugh's College, Oxford, where she received her BA (Hons) in Philosophy and Economics in 1973. She was awarded an MA from Oxford in 1981. She sits on the Middle East Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch and is one of two Quakers who are members of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. She speaks French and Arabic, and currently divides her time between Washington DC and Charlottesville, Virginia.


Doing Peace and Justice: A Panel Presentation

Taif Jany (Panel Moderator): Program Manager, Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC). Taif Jany joined the Iraqi Student Project (ISP) in Syria and was accepted at Union College in Upstate New York, arriving in the U.S. in the summer of 2008. In 2012, Taif graduated from Union with a B.A. in Sociology and French and moved to Washington D.C. Taif interned at the Arab American Institute (AAI), Congressional Quarterly (CQ ROLL CALL), and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)-UN office in New York.

Erik Gustafson: Director, Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC). In 1998, Erik Gustafson established EPIC in Washington DC to improve humanitarian conditions and promote human rights in Iraq. Under his leadership, EPIC has hosted dozens of policy forums and led humanitarian advocacy on Iraq in Washington DC. In 2008, Erik organized Iraq Action Days, which helped war-affected Iraqis and other vulnerable persons worldwide.

Sarah A.K. Ahmed: Director of Operations at Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East (FRRME). Among the former ISP students who returned to Iraq is Sarah Ahmed, a human rights activist. FRRME is a U.K.-based nonprofit charity group promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation. “I operate in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey,” Ahmed says. “This is what I have been trying to do all my life, helping the persecuted and refugees.”

Daryl Byler: Executive Director - Center for Justice & Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisburg, VA. Daryl graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1988 and has 25 years of diverse peacebuilding experience. From 2007 until 2013, he lived in Amman, Jordan, serving as a regional representative for Mennonite Central Committee. In this capacity he worked with local NGO partners in Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Israel-Palestine on a variety of humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding projects.
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“Establishing lasting peace is the work of education.“ Maria Montessori

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