



HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

Religion and Public Life

Annual Report 2022–23

MISSION

Religion and Public Life promotes the public understanding of religion in service of a just world at peace.

APPROACH

We collaborate across disciplines and vocations to examine religion in context in ways that deepen understanding of the causes of injustice while opening imaginative possibilities for addressing the urgent challenges of our time.

TEN-YEAR VISION

By 2032, RPL alumna, fellows, and professional and lifelong learning participants are integrating religious literacy and just peace principles into a wide range of vocations, professions, and arenas. They are creating webs of influence that shape approach and practice, opening new possibilities for addressing critical issues of social importance.

HDS faculty increasingly emphasize the public dimensions of religion in their teaching, research, and professional and lifelong learning offerings. Across Harvard University, including its professional schools, a robust understanding of religion is recognized as essential. HDS's cross-disciplinary convening power will have expanded in response to this growing expectation.

In the public square, religious literacy and just peace principles are increasingly mainstreamed into justice initiatives, as evidenced in public discourse and approach.

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Dear Friends of Religion and Public Life,

Rounding a corner on Religion and Public Life's second academic year, we are hitting our stride, gaining strength and distance in what bell hooks called the "practice of freedom." We continue to advance critical and creative engagement in the work of moving beyond boundaries to imagine new possibilities for advancing a just world at peace.

At RPL, we believe the practice of freedom requires critical engagement with the power religion holds in public life—both its harmful consequences and its imaginative possibilities. Our methods are firmly grounded in theory, but they are intended for practice, both within and far beyond the traditional reaches of divinity school education. This includes sites of conflict and deep structural injustice, as well as in professional fields, including education, journalism, government, organizing, humanitarian action, culture and media, law, and public health, providing leadership for the tumultuous decades to come.

Already, we see impact. We see it in MDiv and MTS graduates entering a wide range of vocations, equipped with language and tools from their Certificate in Religion and Public Life (CRPL) to translate religion to the public sphere. We see it in Master of Religion and Public Life (MRPL) graduates and RPL fellows working to shift their fields toward a deeper understanding of the power of religion. We see it in our collaborations within and beyond Harvard. We see it in the hunger we witness among broader global publics who are actively engaging our resources, public conversation series, and professional and lifelong learning opportunities.

Guided by the vision and commitments articulated in our [Strategic Plan](#), this report reflects our progress on core priorities:

- Strengthen RPL Foundations
- Build the RPL Community
- Influence the Public Realm
- Build a Sustainable Program

With the welcome arrival of summer, RPL's work will continue. This work includes leading the fourth "Narratives of Displacement and Belonging" immersive travel experience to Israel/Palestine; supporting 24 students in RPL domestic and international internships; offering opportunities in our Professional and Lifelong Learning program to high school educators and public health professionals; and preparing for the incoming MRPL class as well as the MTS and MDiv students pursuing the CRPL.

As we conclude the year, we find ourselves moved by the power of the application of religious literacy in context. As faculty, fellows, students and engaged practitioners, we are steeped in the process of just peacebuilding, contributing to an active learning laboratory of action, reflection, and reengagement in deep collaboration. Is just peace possible in our lifetimes? It is an ambition we hold close to our hearts, knowing it is not a destination but a process. Paulo Freire describes this as the work of developing "critical consciousness"—the engaged process of personal and shared transformation required to shift conditions of society toward lasting peace and justice.

Thank you for joining us in the ongoing journey to build critical consciousness toward the "practice of freedom." Thank you for helping us imagine and build beyond the probable toward the possible.



Diane L. Moore
Associate Dean, Religion and Public Life
July 2023



RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE IN 2022–23: BY THE NUMBERS

Fellows:

14



Certificate in Religion and Public Life students:

18

HarvardX

Course participants:

27,792

people since fall 2022



Master of Religion and Public Life students:

7

RPL-supported summer internships:

24



1,038,513

total since launch in 2016

from 193 countries



RPL Website

Page views:

1,041,237

Website visits:

688,926

From:

233

countries and territories



Public events RPL hosted:

30

Attendees at public events:

6,810



Public events RPL co-sponsored:

14

Professional and Lifelong Learning workshops:

13



Religion and the Legacies of Slavery

Series participants:

7,600 registrants

from 75 countries

3,300 attending live sessions

4,650 subsequent YouTube views





MASTER OF RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE

Reflections on the Second Year

In May, HDS matriculated and graduated its second cohort of Master of Religion and Public Life (MRPL) students. These experienced professionals included two prominent corporate executives, a U.S. Navy chaplain, an award-winning journalist, and an expert in social media. Coming from diverse backgrounds, they each engaged in deep explorations of the power and complexity of religion within their sphere of expertise, developing projects to probe the generative possibilities for applying principles of religious literacy to advance just peace.

Graduates from the first year also continue to inspire us as they amplify their experience into the wider world through fields such as public health, education, the performing arts, and public media.

Reflecting on the program's progress, Associate Dean for Religion and Public Life Diane L. Moore noted, "The MRPL experience has once again proven to be powerful and generative for all involved—students, faculty, the Harvard community, and the wider vocational spheres to which our graduates return."

MRPL Students' Final Projects

Austin Bogues, news media journalist
Armageddon & Apokatastasis: Heaven, Hell, and the Religious Backstories of American Polarization

Barbara Dugan, retired marketing executive
Marketing and the Moral Imagination: An Aspirational Approach to Centering Sustainability for a More Just World

Chris Johnson, retired corporate executive
A Preferential Option for the Poor: Can Liberation Theology Inspire Multinational Food Companies to Do Good Business?

Jenn Louie, tech policy, tech governance and risk operations systems expert
Moral Innovation

Kevin Kitrell Ross, Unity Minister
Camp Courage Academy: A Social Change Curriculum for Credentialed Unity Leaders

Saura Sahu, lawyer
American Hymn: American Manifesto

Zachary Zumwalt, U.S. Navy Chaplain
Peacebuilding and the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps: How Religious Literacy Is Critical to Conflict Prevention in the Indo-Pacific



AUSTIN BOGUES, MRPL '23,
USA Today Journalist, Harvard Extension School Instructor

As a journalist, I constantly see how partisanship has come to dominate American culture. I pursued the MRPL degree because I wanted to get a better understanding of the religious influences of polarization in America. My time as a student has led me to be more critical of the underlying structures that shape the day-to-day news cycle and more inquisitive about the nuances that are present in society. In addition, I've become an even more voracious reader, and I've gained a good deal of fluency with academic concepts.

The MRPL program has introduced me to leading scholars and thought leaders. I've been exposed to new ways of thinking every single day. The student body is diverse and talented and caring. This is the most nurturing environment I've encountered as an adult. The relationships and rich traditions at HDS are irreplaceable.



JENN LOUIE, MRPL '23,
Founder of MorallInnovation.com and SpiritualCareProject.com

My time as an HDS student has been mind- and heart-altering. I pursued the MRPL degree because it was a massive departure from my career in tech and offered me a distinctly new perspective and praxis by which to explore the moral conflicts facing society that manifest in online tech, especially in social media. I wanted to learn about moral formation and what has shaped moral conflicts, social justice movements, and peacebuilding.

This program has unsettled normative assumptions and opened new pathways for how I aspire to innovate in the future. My time here has given me the generative space to trace the material and moralizing dimensions of online technologies. Learning about coloniality, about the ways universalizing assumptions are a form of cultural and structural violence, and how theoretical framings of race and religion have shaped our moral ontologies has been huge for me. The program has strengthened my motivation to address systemic social inequity that gets replicated in tech solutions. I am pursuing this effort by developing the Moral Innovation Lab, which elucidates the moral systems embedded in tech and asks how we can innovate consciously toward better moral futures.



RELIGIOUS LITERACY AND THE PROFESSIONS INITIATIVE

The Religious Literacy and the Professions Initiative (RLPI) works collaboratively with 12 experienced professionals who represent expertise across a range of vocations and issues related to just peace. These fellows co-teach the course “Religious Literacy and the Professions” and mentor students. In working with Certificate in Religion and Public Life (CRPL) students pursuing vocations in professional fields, RLPI helps them develop the knowledge, skills, and networks to leverage their Master of Theological Studies (MTS) and Master of Divinity (MDiv) degrees in a professional context. RLPI also facilitates events and trainings to advance the public understanding of religion in service of just peace.

RPL Fellows

In Fall 2022, we welcomed our new RPL Government Fellow, the Rev. Naomi Washington-Leaphart. Washington-Leaphart brought her experiences as director for faith-based and interfaith affairs for the city of Philadelphia, as a member of the interfaith advisory boards to the Department of Homeland Security and the nongovernmental organization Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and as the former faith work director for the National LGBTQ Task Force.

We also welcomed two additional fellows: John Camardella, MRPL '22, and Ans Irfan, MRPL '22, to support our work engaging professionals in education and public health, respectively. Camardella, RPL's Education Program Fellow, developed and delivered religious literacy training workshops in public school districts in Illinois for both teachers and school administrators. Irfan, RPL's Religion and Public Health Fellow, helped develop an online course to provide religious literacy for public health professionals, which will be piloted in summer 2023.

Phil Torrey, RPL Immigrant Rights Fellow



From day one, I was impressed with the depth of thought and reflection with which RPL students engaged the class material. I've learned a tremendous amount from students at RPL, both in and out of the classroom. I've enjoyed witnessing their passion and am eager to see where their careers take them. I was unsure what to expect going into the program, but I am leaving with lifelong friendships and a better understanding of how the tenets of religious

literacy permeate our everyday life. My goal, now, is to bring a religious literacy lens to my work at the law school. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this community!

Philip L. Torrey is the first Immigrant Rights Fellow for the Religious Literacy and the Professions Initiative of Religion and Public Life. Torrey is the director of the Harvard Law School Crimmigration Clinic, managing attorney of the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program, and Lecturer on Law at Harvard Law School.

Tend to Your Questions: Lessons Learned as the RPL Climate Justice Fellow

BY TERESA CAVAZOS COHN, RPL CLIMATE JUSTICE FELLOW

While at RPL, I've learned that the most vibrant interdisciplinary spaces may be unexpected and, by nature, emergent. I often wondered at the shape of the other fellows' questions, the language they used, the way they engaged with their challenges. That process changed me as I put that creative energy into practice.

For example, I challenged myself to facilitate a space with my students that valued creative conversation over scripted content, supporting processes that allow the unexpected rather than the expected to emerge. In my course section, we used mapping as a tool and, as cartographers, questioned our suppositions about the shape of environmental justice—examining both the lines we draw and the lines that draw us. We asked epistemological and ethical questions about our own maps and each other's maps, which I took to my students at the University of New Hampshire. I then brought their questions back to RPL and had them meet each other in the Harvard Map Room to examine maps and justice together. This experience gave rise to one of the questions that is now driving my work: “How will we draw lines more justly than the lines of the past as our global climate changes? And what happens when the arts, sciences, and humanities together with communities take on that task?”

RPL taught me to foster creativity for its own sake and not to aim for a particular prescribed end, and that building creative capacity in community is an essential skill to refine

as we engage with the critical issues of our time. One of the highlights of my fellowship was seeing the impact of creativity in community during the student-led Climate Justice Week in April 2023. The week was buoyant even amidst our grief in the social-ecological realities of climate change. I felt honored to speak on the Religious Literacy and Climate Justice panel with Naomi Washington-Leaphart and Cynthia Wilson and engage in shared questions together to find common themes in climate justice across the Earth sciences, Indigenous organizing, and governance. The spontaneity and the creative energy generated by interdisciplinary collision and collusion was a great and unexpected gift.

Read [Teresa Cavazos Cohn's full reflection](https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news) at rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news.

Teresa Cavazos Cohn, PhD, is Associate Professor of Natural Resources and the Environment in the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture at the University of New Hampshire. While a research associate professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Society at the University of Idaho, Cohn co-founded the interdisciplinary Confluence Lab. Cohn's research and outreach projects have been supported by the National Science Foundation, Andrew J. Mellon Foundation, NASA, and Milkweed Press.



Events and Skills-Training Opportunities

Community Forums

RLPI hosted four HDS community forums to analyze the religious dimensions of current events and to consider ways to respond. These events were organized by RPL graduate assistants, with HDS community members and featured guest experts and students.

The first forum focused on the summer 2022 Supreme Court decisions related to prayer in school, funding for religious schools, and reproductive rights. The second forum discussed the protests in Iran and the Iranian government's repressive response, followed by a vigil for victims of political violence in Iran and elsewhere. The third forum focused on current events in Florida, including Governor Ron DeSantis's efforts to restrict LGBTQI+ rights, the creation of Advanced Placement African American history courses in public schools, and programs advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. The final forum discussed religious nationalism in India, specifically the dynamics of Hindutva and its effects on India's diverse religious communities.



Public Engagement Skills-Training Workshops



Two workshops were held this year to provide training in skills necessary for advancing the public understanding of religion. The first featured HDS alumnus Simran Jeet Singh, who currently serves as the executive director of the Aspen Institute's Religion and Society Program. Jeet Singh brought his decades of experience as a media commentator and journalist to provide a half-day introductory workshop on writing and pitching opinion pieces.

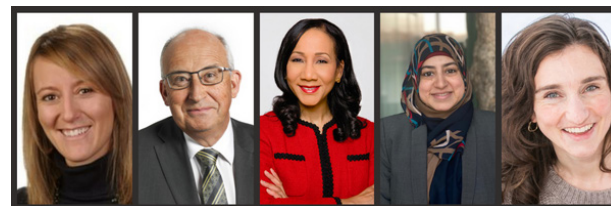
"I walked away with tools and insights I didn't have before on how to write an op-ed. It was an exceptional afternoon of learning a new skill." —PARTICIPANT RESPONSE

The second workshop featured HDS alumna Nadiya Brock, now with Essential Partners, who provided a full-day training on facilitating dialogue on contentious issues. Students were introduced to Essential Partner's method of reflective structured dialogue and then taken through exercises in crafting dialogue questions, developing guidelines for safe conversations, and techniques for responding to difficult moments.

"I learned an entirely new facilitation approach that I can apply to specific and unique settings." —PARTICIPANT RESPONSE

Leading Toward Justice Series

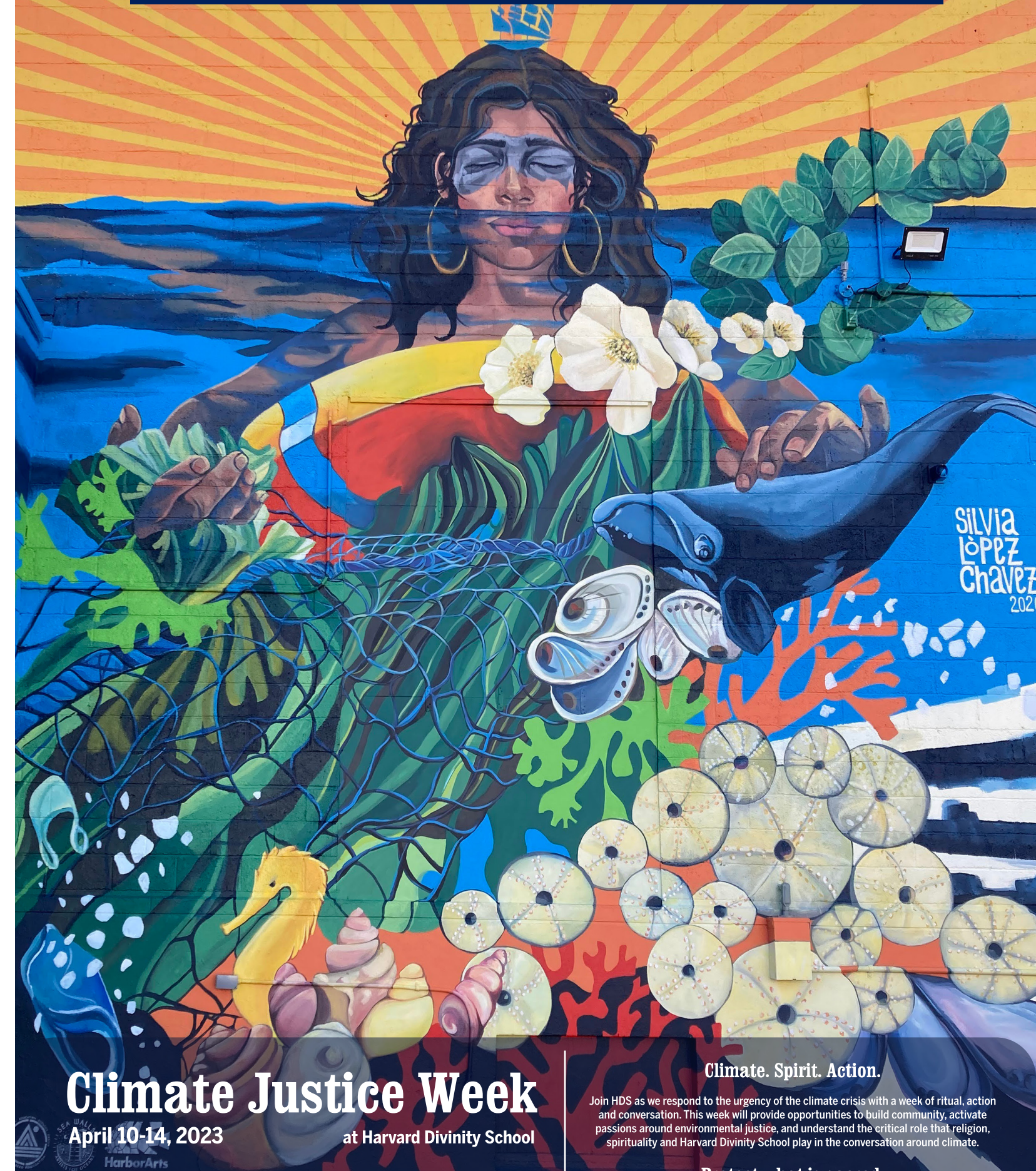
This year, the Leading Toward Justice event series, created by RPL and the HDS alumni relations team in the Office of Development and External Relations, featured HDS alumna reflecting on how their religion studies have informed their secular-defined work. Moderated by RLPI Associate Director Susie Hayward, the first panel focused on government and public sector settings, and the second focused on community organizing to advance social justice.



"Thoughtful questions from the moderator and very helpful insights from the panel. It raised new issues for me that I hadn't thought about and gave me some actionable ways to move forward. Love hearing the stories and practical ways to make positive change in society." —COMMUNITY ORGANIZING ATTENDEE

"The authenticity of the speakers, the great questions by the moderator, the range of different positions and faiths presented, and how they all navigate the very real messiness of life in authentic ways true to themselves no matter how different they are. A heartfelt thank you! I thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt much from it." —GOVERNMENT ATTENDEE

STUDENT-LED INITIATIVE: HDS Climate Justice Week



Climate Justice Week
April 10-14, 2023
at Harvard Divinity School

Climate. Spirit. Action.

Join HDS as we respond to the urgency of the climate crisis with a week of ritual, action and conversation. This week will provide opportunities to build community, activate passions around environmental justice, and understand the critical role that religion, spirituality and Harvard Divinity School play in the conversation around climate.

Protect what is sacred.



Collective Imagination

A Hopeful Force at the Center of Climate Justice

BY ANNA DEL CASTILLO, MDIV '21 AND CLIMATE JUSTICE WEEK LEAD ORGANIZER

Climate Justice Week was the first of its kind at Harvard Divinity School. The week presented a mosaic of wisdom from across the divinity school. Led by a coalition of 11 partner offices, Climate Justice Week exemplified the power of collective imagination.



While Climate Justice Week took place on campus, Jackson, Mississippi, my hometown, experienced an environmental emergency. The city was without trash service. “What do you mean?” I asked my mom on a phone call before facilitating Friday’s keynote conversation. “I mean that the trash is piling up on the streets again.” She replied. “No one has picked up the trash for days and we’re not hopeful.” Jackson’s trash crisis comes months after the city made national news for a water crisis that kept 150,000 residents, including my parents and loved ones, from safe drinking water. The city issues a boil-water notice almost every other day.

As we engage in discussions around climate justice at Harvard University, one of the most powerful institutions on the planet, many of the communities that our students call home are experiencing the realities of systemic racism and environmental injustice. The issues plaguing my community in Jackson, the Blackest city in America, illustrate why the conversations at the center of Climate Justice Week are critical. HDS community members are looking for spaces to process, witness and leave activated and inspired to engage in solution work locally.

A key takeaway from the week is that climate justice is racial justice, and that the climate crisis is a spiritual crisis. The work we are doing at HDS is examining the root causes of the contaminated water, the red skies, and the drying lakes. We are creating spiritual interventions to push for change and highlight that planetary health and spiritual wellbeing are deeply interconnected.

Read [Anna Del Castillo's full reflection](https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news) at rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news.



“The land is part of us and we’re part of the land. All we’re doing is borrowing the energy of the body of the earth that we have right now, then we’ll be returning it back. In the grand scheme of things, we’re not here for very long, so what is the work that you’re going to do, the stuff that you’re going to leave behind for future generations?” —ANGELO BACA, ARTIST AND ACTIVIST



HDS students, faculty, and staff organized Climate Justice Week—an initiative consisting of nine events, a trash audit, and a photography exhibit to build connections and inspire action. RPL sponsored “Climate Justice as Racial Justice: Student Panel,” “Art and Activism workshop with Angelo Baca,” “Religious Literacy and Climate Justice: RPL Fellows Panel,” and “Keynote Conversation: Examining the Religious and Spiritual Implications of Climate Change.”



CERTIFICATE IN RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE

In 2023 our first cohort of MTS and MDiv students completed the two-year process of earning the Certificate in Religion and Public Life (CRPL). These 18 students completed their CRPL internships during the summer and fall of 2022. Among these students are: Haley Barker, MTS '23, who interned at Religion News Service, writing pieces that were picked up by the Associated Press and the Washington Post, and winning third place in the Religion News Association's 2023 Chandler Award for Excellence in Student Reporting; Mayank Kumar, MTS '23, who interned with the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, working on a project addressing political polarization with U.S. faith communities; and Ciara Moezidis, MTS '24, who interned with the External Office of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, conducting global consultations that fed into the SR's report to the General Assembly about issues related to freedom of religion or belief in regions experiencing violent conflict.

The cohort then developed capstone projects that deepened their theoretical and methodological understanding of religion and public life by combining their insights from their internship experience with their course work. Among the students' final projects were a training program on religious literacy for Canadian diplomats, journalistic coverage through TikTok on the intersection of religion and public life in Boston, an International Baccalaureate curriculum teaching the book *Persepolis* through a religious literacy-informed approach, and a guide for the Geneva-based organization International Bridges to Justice to incorporate religious literacy into its global efforts to advance access to justice.

CRPL Internship Sites, Summer 2023

In 2022–23, a new batch of students began the CRPL program. During summer 2023, these students will apply the theories and methods they were exposed to in the fall 2022 course "Religious Literacy and the Professions," in their individual internship placements, listed below. While in these internships, they will learn with and from one another and Associate Director Susie Hayward via regular virtual group check-in sessions and written discussion board posts.

- Apprentice to Maytha Alhassen (Los Angeles, CA)
- Aspen Institute's Religion and Society Program (remote)
- AUNA (Mexico)
- BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (Bethlehem, West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territories)
- Churches for Middle East Peace (Bethlehem, West Bank, occupied Palestinian territories)
- City of Boston Government (Boston, MA)
- DeeperDive (remote)
- GreenFaith (hybrid)
- Harvard Law School's Refugee and Immigration Clinic (Cambridge, MA)
- International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (Washington, DC)
- Interfaith Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)
- Kids Educational Engagement Project (Liberia)
- Olivetti Leadership Institute Ivrea (Italy)
- The Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)
- Unity Productions Foundation (hybrid)
- U.S. Institute of Peace, Nonviolent Action Program (remote)
- U.S. Institute of Peace Program on Violent Extremism (Washington, DC)
- U.S. Institute of Peace, Religion and Inclusive Societies Program (Washington, DC)
- Utah Diné Bikéyeh (Navajo Nation, San Juan County, Utah)

Graduating CRPL Students' Capstone Projects

KAYLA BACH, Government (MTS)
A Guide to Building Religious Literacy for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

HALEY BARKER, Journalism (MTS)
Religion Next Door: Boston, a TikTok Account

EMILY CHAUDHARI, Journalism (MTS)
Disrupting Embedded Theologies: How My Mom Found Healing in the Aftermath of Childhood Trauma

PRABHROOP CHAWLA, Government (MTS)
A Guide on Religious Literacy for Global Affairs Canada

ALIYAH COLLINS, Organizing (MDiv)
Spirituality, Blues, and Violence: Rap Hermeneutical Approach for Community Organizers in Memphis

NAOMI FASTOVSKY, Humanitarianism (MTS)
Buddhism in Humanitarian Action: A Blog Centering on Buddhist Humanitarian Practitioners

CAMILLA GRAY, Humanitarianism (MTS)
Engaging with Religious Leaders: NGOs Supporting Women's Freedoms and Autonomy in the Rohingya Camps

KEVIN KEYSTONE, Organizing (MTS)
An "Ethic of Love"

MAYANK KUMAR, Humanitarianism (MTS)
Religious Literacy Approaches for Empowering Religious Influencers? Analytic Tools for ICRD's Domestic Program on Reducing Polarization in American Evangelical Christian Communities

ELSA KUNZ, Education (MTS)
Religious Literacy in the IB World Literature Classroom: Teaching Persepolis, a Curriculum

EOIN LYONS, Humanitarianism (MTS)
Empowering Access to Justice through Engagement with Faith-Based Actors: A Critical Toolkit designed for International Bridges to Justice

HTAY WAI NAING, Humanitarianism (MTS)
Filling the Gap? Parahita Network for Humanitarian Aid in Myanmar's Sagaing Region

MAGGIE THIELENS, Entertainment Media (MTS)
Hip-Hop History: Understanding Black Muslim American History through Music

JOY ZHANG, Entertainment Media (MTS)
A Noob's Guide to Religion in Video Games

ANNIE ABLON, Entertainment Media (MDiv)
What Does It Mean to Address Religion in Entertainment Media?

SULTAN KHAN, Humanitarianism (MDiv)
Muslim Women: Agency, Activism, and Humanitarian Praxis

CHARLOTTE MCADAMS, Humanitarianism (MTS)
Pathways to Spiritually Integrated Mental Health Care

CIARA MOEZIDIS, Humanitarianism (MTS)
Iran's #WOMANLIFEFREEDOM Movement: Advocacy and Analysis through a Religiously Literate Lens

ELSA KUNZ, MTS '23, RPL Graduate Assistant



I was a teacher before coming to HDS, so I was drawn to CRPL's education track, which allowed me to pursue my passion for working with adolescents while developing religious literacy skills in context.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have participated in the CRPL program with other HDS students, all of whom are also passionate about advancing RPL's vision of just peace. It's invigorating to be around them, and it's fun to be able to bounce ideas around, get feedback, and share stories together. I am grateful to Susie Hayward for consistently checking in on me and providing me with connections to other educators in the field. I am also grateful to

Education Fellow Sarabindh Levy-Brightman and my internship advisor, Misty Koger-Ojure at Bunker Hill Community College, who helped me uncover my own passion for critical theory and philosophy of education as domains of study.

CRPL provided me with new language to talk about religion, real-world practice writing curriculum, and valuable mentorship with teachers incorporating RPL methods into their practice. Without my CRPL internship placement as a teaching assistant in introduction to world religions and ethics survey courses at the local community college, I would not have received a job offer to teach tenth-grade ethics at an independent school in Tennessee following graduation.

An Anchor and a Path: Student Reflections on the Certificate in Religion and Public Life

BY NATALIE CHERIE CAMPBELL, MTS '18

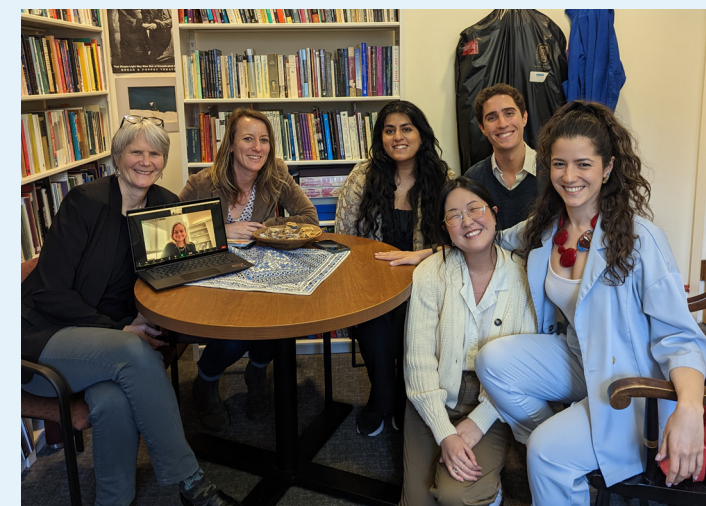
When Susie Hayward, associate director of the Religious Literacy and the Professions Initiative, came to Harvard Divinity School as a student, she knew that she wanted to pursue a career in foreign policy, peacebuilding, and diplomacy.

"I wanted to bring an understanding of religion into those spaces where a lack of it was preventing progress," she says. "But I quickly learned that I would have to forge my own way at HDS to develop the relationships and pragmatic skills needed to work in policymaking and diplomacy post-graduation."

Hayward is one of decades of HDS students who have wanted to pursue vocations outside the two defined dimensions of HDS programs—academia and traditional forms of ministry. When Religion and Public Life (RPL) was created, it responded to this student need with one of its two curricular components, the Certificate in Religion and Public Life (CRPL).

The CRPL provides a structured opportunity for current Master of Divinity (MDiv) and Master of Theological Studies (MTS) students to think about their degrees in context.

"The very possibility that I could help create the program that I wish had existed when I was a student, that offers



that critical work of translating and leveraging the study of religion in different professional fields through internships, skills building, and relationships with professionals, was exciting to me and everyone I talked to," Hayward says.

The program is built on "the assumption of collaboration," Diane L. Moore, associate dean of Religion and Public Life, explains. "We have a lot to learn from experts in arenas

outside our own, and we believe we have something to offer relevant to a complex understanding of religion."

"With professionals in other fields, we create pathways for those pursuing 'secular professions' to deeply consider how religious literacy fits into larger questions of inclusion and building opportunities for just peace," Moore says. "Our students can become real leaders in a world that desperately needs an understanding of the powerful force of religion."

Now, three years after the debut of Religion and Public Life, the first CRPL cohort of MDiv and MTS students are graduating. CRPL students Prabhroop Kaur Chawla, MTS '23, Kevin Keystone, MTS '23, Auds Hope Jenkins, MTS '24, Ariella Gayotto Hohl, MDiv '24, and Camilla Gray, MTS '23, reflect on their experiences in the program.

The Possibilities When Religion Is Part of The Conversation

AUDS HOPE JENKINS

(JOURNALISM): Reading Professor Moore's white paper about the RPL method was the first thing that got me excited about the program. The paper is simultaneously a rigorous piece of scholarly work and a humble invitation to professionals across many different fields to contribute their expertise to advancing religious literacy at a time when we desperately need it. I love that the paper says "DRAFT" all over it. It illustrates the deeply collaborative, iterative nature of this coalition-building project. The CRPL program has expanded my sense of possibility for how the study of religion can support our collective pursuit of justice.



ARIELLA GAYOTTO HOHL

(ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA): I was lucky to be at HDS right when the first cohort for CRPL formed. My calling is storytelling, and I want to dedicate myself to creating a space for my community, the Muslim community, and bring my abilities to bear for the communities I'm trying to build.



Pursuing filmmaking as an MDiv student was hard, though. I didn't have a lot of resources to figure out the technical aspects of my education. But then Maytha Alhassan was named an RPL Media and Entertainment Fellow. She worked on the TV series *Ramy*, and I was like, "This is the kind of story I want to tell." It gave me a path.

I thought I had to choose before: either I'm going to go into chaplaincy or I'm going to be a filmmaker. CRPL was the first time I didn't have to choose, where I could think of ministry and filmmaking in the same way. It gave me a framework and support system to bring together my two vocations.

CAMILLA GRAY (HUMANITARIAN

ACTION): Like Ariella, I was in a position before coming here where I felt like I needed to pick between a PhD in religion or work in humanitarian spaces. I did my bachelor's in Islamic studies and Sufism. Then I stepped into the humanitarian space, working with the United Nations Development Program, among other organizations. My work didn't relate to religion at all, and I wanted to bridge those two interests. CRPL was an incredible opportunity to do that.



PRABHROOP KAUR CHAWLA

(GOVERNMENT): I also wanted to bridge my bachelor's degree in international development and globalization and my master's degree in international affairs, diplomacy, and foreign policy with this focus on religion. In those arenas, we often talk about intersectionality or "bottom-up" approaches to diplomacy and development, all those areas where one considers the range of factors that are at play. Religion is one of those factors. It is often the most salient one—in explicit, implicit, and embedded forms—but it can be overlooked.



I thought my MTS in religion, ethics and politics would help me understand those linkages, and it was the certificate that acted as the anchor, that was pivotal in concretely making that connection. The MTS broadened my understanding, and CRPL deeply rooted me and helped me understand and situate religious literacy in the context of international relations. It was the pillar from which I understood that linkage.

KEVIN KEYSTONE (ORGANIZING):

I want to dovetail on what Prabhroop said about the CRPL rooting us. CRPL was the anchor for my degree. The virtues of CRPL for me, came down to three things: religious literacy, plus an internship in my profession of choice, plus the opportunity to do a capstone. That for me was a perfect thread through my degree in religion, ethics, and politics.



It meant that I got to examine questions of Zionism and Anti-Zionism, in particular in Palestine and Israel and in the North American Jewish context, through a religious literacy lens. I got to do an internship in community organizing. Now the capstone gives me the opportunity to tie everything together, to look back and say, ‘Okay. What have I learned? What work have I been doing here? And how can I wrap a bow around it and then apply it into the thing that I’m going to do next?’”

The Opportunity for Life-changing Interactions

CAMILLA: My CRPL project has become my career, and my project wouldn’t even exist if Mike Delaney, the RPL Humanitarian Fellow, hadn’t been such an incredible support the entire way through.

Mike connected me with humanitarian workers working in Cox’s Bazar for my very first report in the first semester of the CRPL course. He has also written all my cover letters for grants that I’ve applied for to go to Bangladesh.

After my CRPL internship, where I worked in the Islamic Law and jurisprudence team in Geneva with the International Committee for the Red Cross, I went to Bangladesh with Oxfam, another connection through Mike. I worked with the gender team to conduct research on their work with religious leaders in relation to women’s rights. That work was funded by a grant from the Harvard Kennedy School Women and Public Policy Program (WAPPP), which I applied for with the paper I wrote for the fall CRPL course.

I have continued to receive funding for my research, specifically looking at how NGOs can collaborate with Rohingya imams and muftis to address issues related to the provisioning of humanitarian aid and gender equity in the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh, from the Harvard Asia Center and the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute. The final humanitarian report I’m putting together, which combines all my field research and original interviews, serves as my capstone.

I truly don’t know where I would be if I didn’t do this certificate. To be honest, I feel like my career would be so fundamentally different. It’s actually impossible for me to fathom.

ARIELLA: Can I jump in on the CRPL-changed-my-life train? When I started looking for an internship, I emailed the full list of HDS grads who had ever worked in filmmaking. When I talked to Unity Productions Foundation’s Award-Winning Director Alex Kronemer, an HDS grad and one of the contacts that Susie supplied, my initial ask was simply, “Can I please have an internship?” I was met with, “Yeah,



maybe you can assist the production or something,” which then became, “Actually, here’s your talent contract. Would you like to host the show?”

What was just supposed to be my CRPL internship has now turned into my first TV-host job for a show I’m co-writing and co-creating. The show is a dream. It’s called Islam’s Greatest Love Stories, so it is dear to me. It’s centered around me and my experience as a student.

I didn’t know this was even possible. That was the important thing for me. CRPL gave me the ability to say, “What if I dream really big?” I remember saying, “You know what? I want to be the Anthony Bourdain of religion, and then it just fell on my lap.

Being in the CRPL course, building a vocabulary around the things that were important to me, and then seeing the example of the fellows really helped me. It wasn’t just the work that we were doing and the doors that they were opening for me, although Maytha would have opened many doors. It was just seeing someone doing it and thinking, “I can be doing that, too.” I’m Brazilian and Lebanese and seeing a woman who dresses similar to the way I do, who likes talking about the same things that I do, who is doing the kind of work I am doing, who didn’t choose between one or the other and works in these two worlds, gave me confidence.

I can trust the stories and the conversations we are having, which have completely catapulted my career in ways that I couldn’t imagine. I’m thankful for this program letting me dream.

Read the full conversation, [“An Anchor and a Path: Student Reflections on the Certificate in Religion and Public Life,”](https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news) at rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news.

THE INAUGURAL RPL STUDENT PHOTO COMPETITION

RPL invited Harvard graduate students participating in RPL programs to submit photographs from their summer internship experiences for a judged photo competition. Students were invited to address the theme of religion and public life and a just world at peace while adhering to RPL’s ethical photography guidance. The winners of the inaugural competition (listed below) were celebrated at an open house in November 2022, and their work may be seen in person in the RPL office on the second floor of Divinity Hall.

Silwan (1st Place)

SHIR LOVETT-GRAFF, MTS ’23

In Silwan, East Jerusalem, where this photo was taken, we learned about settlers seizing property, aided by the government. Palestinians whose homes are declared illegal are forced to demolish their own multigenerational homes. Often, community members would come out to support the family during these acts of destruction, love interposed against violence. The Arabic mural reads: “We won’t leave. On this land is the most sacred land.”



Camel Turns Holy Well (2nd Place)

MAGGIE THIELENS, MTS ’23

In Kairouan, Tunisia, a camel draws water from the Holy Well Bir Barouta, which dates to the seventeenth century. Water is crucial to the architecture and history of Kairouan and continues to reflect the many spiritual aspects of its public life today.



Haifa (3rd Place)

SHIR LOVETT-GRAFF, MTS ’23

This photo depicts a destroyed Palestinian cultural space and theater in Haifa, Israel, a gathering place for Palestinian art and community before 1948. I thought about the multiplicities of “danger”: the space, filled with broken glass and debris; the space, a danger to the state because it centered creativity and joy.



Honorable mentions can be found at [“The Winning Images of the Inaugural RPL Student Photo Competition,”](https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news) rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news, November 17, 2022.



RELIGION, CONFLICT, AND PEACE INITIATIVE

The Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative (RCPI) has advanced ways of engaging diverse audiences inside and outside of the academy by developing imaginative paradigms for fostering just-peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine and beyond.

This year RCPI had three focuses: 1) expanding and solidifying Harvard academic and programmatic offerings to foster cross-disciplinary engagements; 2) continuing to build networks among scholars and practitioners around issues of peace and justice; and 3) developing a framework for considering future case studies.

Expanding Harvard Academic and Programmatic Offerings

During the past year, RCPI supported and developed academic offerings with Harvard's graduate schools by integrating the discussions at the initiative into classes, fellowships, study programs, events, and internships.

RCPI transformed the traditional J-Term course "Learning in Context: Narratives of Displacement and Belonging in Israel/Palestine" into a semester-long interdisciplinary course open to all Harvard graduate students, followed by an experiential learning component on the ground in Israel/Palestine in June. This year, the course had 17 students enrolled from six Harvard schools—the Divinity School, Kennedy School (HKS), Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), School of Education, School of Design, and Law School. The learning-in-context component consisted of more than 40 tours, visits, and meetings with organizations and individuals in Israel and the West Bank. Seven students decided to complete a two-month summer internship available to those who participate in the "Learning in Context" course. Internship locations will include local human rights and legal centers, arts and cultural centers, a refugee camp community center, and larger regional and global organizations such as Churches for Middle East Peace and the YWCA.

Professors Raef Zreik, Atalia Omer, and Diane L. Moore co-taught the interdisciplinary course "Religion, Nationalism and Settler Colonialism: The Case Study of Israel/Palestine," which examined the conceptual logic of using a settler-colonial lens to interpret the history and politics of Israel/Palestine. The course attracted students from HDS, HKS, FAS, Tufts University, and the Advanced Leadership Initiative (ALI) fellowship at Harvard.

For the second year in a row, RCPI facilitated a reading group titled "Decolonizing the Syllabus on Palestine/Israel: What Does Religion Have to Do With It?" We met for six 90-minute sessions during the fall semester and had 23 participants, including RCPI faculty affiliates and other Harvard faculty from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Law School, Medical School, School of Design, and Divinity School, faculty from UMass Amherst and Dartmouth College, and alumni of RCPI's "Narratives of Displacement and Belonging in Israel/Palestine" course. The reading group enhanced our cross-disciplinary learning and broadened our networks within and outside of Harvard University.

RCPI participated in a panel at the American Academy of Religion in November 2022. In addition, the nine public events RCPI held this year focused on three primary themes: protest, nationhood and democracy, and solidarity.

PROTEST: "The Embodiment of Protest: Hunger Strikes, Human Rights, and the Health of Palestinian Political Prisoners" explored various legal, medical, and human rights dimensions of hunger strikes being staged by Palestinian political prisoners. In a book talk with Amahl A. Bishara, on her *Crossing a Line: Laws, Violence and Roadblocks to Political Expression*, she analyzed how Palestinians create collectivities in circumstances of constraint, illuminating how expression is always grounded in place and how a people can struggle together for liberation even when they cannot join together in protest. Panelists at the event "An Extreme Religious Right Is in Control: Implications for Israeli Anti-Occupation Activism and the Mizrahi Left" interrogated the relations between the Israeli mass protest against diminishing judicial independence and decades of occupation by contextualizing the emergence of an extremist right-wing religious and settler (annexationist) agenda in the recent Israeli elections.

NATIONHOOD AND DEMOCRACY: Panelists in "Another Israeli Election: Assessing Trends in Israeli and Jewish Politics" examined the gradual strengthening of Jewish exclusionary political parties, the influences of Jewish and Christian American agendas on Israeli political trends, and the historical and philosophical meanings of Jewish political modernity. In the book talk on *Rethinking Statehood in Palestine: Self-Determination and Decolonization beyond Partition*, edited by Leila H. Farsakh, discussion centered on how notions of citizenship, sovereignty, and nationhood are being rethought within the broader context of decolonization. Participants in the event "The Palestinian Question as a Jewish Question" interrogated how questions of war and peace, borders, security, or the "two state" solution become more and more internal to Israel, relating intimately with questions of the identity of the state, its character, and its constitutional structure and democratic nature.

SOLIDARITY: Discussants in the book talk on *Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire* imagined the future of Gaza beyond the cruelties of daily life, while reaffirming the critical role of Gaza in Palestinian identity, history, and struggle for liberation. Participants in "Transnational Solidarity, Israel/Palestine, and Intellectual Legacies of Desmond Tutu" discussed Tutu's thought on apartheid in Israel/Palestine, as well as broader transnational solidarity. The event "Displacement and Belonging in Israel/Palestine: Harvard Student Stories of Learning in Context" gave space for students from the 2022 "Learning in Context" cohort to share their experiences of joy, resistance, and solidarity from their summer in Israel/Palestine.



Building Networks and Community at Harvard and Beyond

This year, we continued to build a community of scholars and practitioners that can carry the RCPI experience to broad and diverse audiences as they engage creatively and dynamically with topics related to religion, conflict, and peace.

Our growing community of RCPI affiliates has resulted in exciting collaborations. This year, we worked with Salma Waheedi of the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School to amplify the work the clinic is doing on Israel/Palestine, some of it groundbreaking for Harvard. We are now planning a joint program for the upcoming academic year. We also collaborated with Bram Wispelwey and David Mills in the launch of the Palestine Program for Health and Human Rights at the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights and in planning their first course offering on the ground at Birzeit University in the West Bank in July 2023. We continued to work closely with Sara Roy from the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and engaged new faculty members across the University for possible affiliation and in preparation for a new Professional and Lifelong Learning (PLL) course in Israel/Palestine, which we plan to offer in the upcoming academic year.

Professor Raef Zreik joined RCPI as the Religion and Public Life Visiting Scholar in Conflict and Peace for the spring semester. Zreik actively contributed to the community throughout the semester, co-teaching the course “Religion, Nationalism, and Settler Colonialism: The Case of Israel/Palestine”; meeting with students; and joining in events as a speaker, respondent, or moderator. He also took part in a Julis Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law event, “Constitutional Crisis in Israel? Noah Feldman and Raef Zreik in Conversation,” at Harvard Law School.



RCPI alumna continue to engage and connect with us in ways that enrich the experience of our community members. For example, Shir Lovett-Graff, MTS '23, and Kevin Keystone, MTS '23, launched the Harvard student group Jews for Liberation. Kathryn (Katie) Lorber Falk, FAS '21, who returned to Israel/Palestine to volunteer in the Southern Hebron Hills with Heneinu and the Center for Jewish Nonviolence, joined our J-Term group when we visited the Southern Hebron Hills and shared her experiences and work with the students. Other alumna from prior cohorts met with new students during program dinners during the fall and spring semesters. Ten RCPI alumna also joined our fall reading group.

May 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of what Palestinians call the Nakba, or catastrophe: the founding of the modern state of Israel and the accompanying mass displacement and violence experienced by Palestinians. Hilary Rantisi, associate director of the Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative, spoke at First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC, at a commemorative event, sharing her family's experience of the Nakba and offering an update on the current challenge to and opportunities for advancing just peace in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Developing a Framework for RCPI Future Case Studies

In keeping with commitments made in the RPL strategic plan, this year we determined a process for adding more case-study locations to the program in addition to our study of Israel/Palestine. The approach includes three components that form the academic foundation for any new case study and learning: content, praxis, and implementation. In addition, the approach requires skilled personnel at RPL with in-depth understanding and knowledge of regional context from both academic study of and field experience in the case-study location. In addition to their knowledge of and connections to people and institutions of meaning, they need to have a background in the academic discussions covered in the program and the capacity to convert their contacts into engaging relationships with the students and faculty.

RCPI Internship Sites, Summer 2023

- BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (Bethlehem, West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territories)
- Churches for Middle East Peace (Bethlehem, West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territories)
- Human Rights Center (Ramallah, Occupied Palestinian Territories)
- Lajee Center (Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem, West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territories)
- Qattan Foundation (Ramallah, Occupied Palestinian Territories)
- YWCA (Jerusalem)

SHIR LOVETT-GRAFF, MTS '23



I was drawn to RCPI because I wanted to deepen my historical, religious, and political knowledge of Israel-Palestine in a non-Jewish learning space. Growing up in liberal Zionist Jewish communities and then becoming an anti-Zionist activist in my early 20s, I knew that many narratives had been purposely hidden from me to feed a particular political agenda. I could not have anticipated that HDS would offer me a space to learn about decolonization, nonviolent resistance, and censorship in relation to Israel/Palestine through RCPI.

Our experiential learning trip was a formative, painful, and powerful experience that shaped my on-the-ground understanding of political realities in Israel/Palestine. Our conversations with leaders at Palestinian arts and culture organizations helped me realize the way that Israeli apartheid intends to destroy everything—from after-school art programs to independent film festivals—despite claims by liberal Zionists to the contrary. It makes

me, as a community organizer and a writer, consider how threatening art, public storytelling, and cultural preservation are to oppressive systems, and what it looks like to build solidarity through art and culture.

I know that my long-term community work will be to grow Jewish communities decoupled from Zionism, either as a rabbi, chaplain, or ritualist. I want to provide spiritual counseling and support to individuals engaged in the terrifying work of building new political and spiritual identities beyond what they have been taught. I am also interested in supporting organizations and individuals in thinking expansively about conflict, mediation, and restorative justice, especially within grassroots organizations, carceral spaces, and NGOs. Without my experiences through RCPI, I could not have named that the work I feel most passionately about lies at the intersection of conflict transformation and spiritual care, both in relation to Israel/Palestine and beyond.

Listen to [Shir Lovett-Graff's Memorial Church Morning Prayers sermon](#) on radical imagination, gender, and political dreaming on Harvard Memorial Church's channel on [soundcloud.com](#).

HARVARD STUDENT STORIES OF LEARNING IN CONTEXT Displacement and Belonging in Israel/Palestine

Two Gals in Pal: Leveraging TikTok to Bring Stories from Palestine to Americans

BY ERIN NAOMI BURROWS

What's the recipe for nuanced attention to complex issues like Israel/Palestine? For two Harvard Divinity School students (one who graduated last spring), it's a strategy of consistent content on a newly launched TikTok account that surpassed half a million views in its first two weeks.

"How can we make it so that when people hear 'Palestine' they know, yes, tragic things are happening but there's also so much joy in this community?" asks Ciara Moezidis, master of theological studies (MTS) '24 and Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy student. "Hospitality, generosity, care for one another and for those who visit [Palestine]. . . it's hard to even grasp. We're trying to capture that disorientation of joy and tragedy of what it's like to visit and what it's like to be Palestinian."

Ciara Moezidis and Sami Manausa, MTS '22 spent the 2021-22 academic year immersed in the study of peace and violence through exploring the case study of Israel/Palestine. Ciara sat

in on Prof. Diane L. Moore's class as an undergraduate sophomore as part of the Diversity and Explorations (DivEx) program. Once enrolled at HDS, "There was nothing I wouldn't do to be in this class," she said about her determination to join the Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative experiential course, "Learning in Context: Narratives of Displacement and Belonging in Israel/Palestine." The course includes a two-week trip to the region led by Religion and Public Life faculty and staff.

"It's a cliché but the class is life-changing. I don't think there's a single person who went who wasn't profoundly impacted by the trip. It really is an unprecedented privilege." Sami says.

Read the full article, "[Two Gals in Pal](#)," at [rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news](#).



Paradox and Shabbat in Israel/Palestine

BY SHIR LOVETT-GRAFF, MTS '23

Growing up, I was taught that Shabbat, the day of rest, is "a taste of the world to come"—"a palace in time" where we can imagine life as it should be. But in Israel/Palestine, sirens announced Shabbat like an echo of an incoming emergency, 24 hours in which essential public services shut down and time slowed without consent. While spending my summer in Jerusalem through the Religion, Conflict and Peace Initiative, the question of whether to celebrate Shabbat as an anti-Zionist Jew pressed on me like a heartbeat growing louder.

One of the spiritual crises I experienced this summer was whether to observe this tradition intrinsic to Jewish life and practice, because Shabbat was used as a tool of the state to assert authority over Palestinian movement and livelihood. The irony did not escape me. I was in Jerusalem, a place deeply significant, historically and spiritually, to my people, and yet the morality of observing Shabbat was up for debate. In the United States, Shabbat was an act of resistance to capitalism. Shabbat was a defiant stance against assimilation

into white Protestant Christian hegemony. Shabbat was a fight against productivity culture, to overcommitment, and to anxiety about not doing enough, not being enough. To rest for 24 hours was to leave space for dreaming, to honor my ancestors, and to expand my awareness of the world I take for granted.

In Israel/Palestine, I wondered if boycotting Shabbat was another form of resistance. Israel told me: You are a Jew, and so your legacy, entitlement, and power are here. You can own Jewish practice at the expense of other people. You are entitled to Shabbat in this land. To abstain from Shabbat, then, felt like a stubborn rebellion against the doctrine of the state. Israel tried to convince me to engage Jewishly in order to feed its agenda of suppression, control, and colonial power.

Read [Shir Lovett-Graff's full reflection](#) at [rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news](#).



56 Years of Temporary

BY KEVIN KEYSTONE, MTS '23

When you get to the Ofer Military Court, you are nowhere. The parking lot is just a wide expanse of sand and gravel. The path to the court itself is long and winding. It sort of goes on forever. It's a little bit like you're walking into no-man's-land or the desert. But there are some giveaways.



At the top of a tall embankment is a military base—clue number one. Along the other side of the path you walk down is a tall fence with barbed wire curled along the top—another giveaway. But at the entrance to that parking lot is a man who sells tea and snacks.

It's strange, this oasis in the middle of the desert, until you realize, oh, many people must come here, and that's how he makes a living. He makes a living from the many Palestinians and just the handful of Israelis who come here. The Palestinians come as prisoners and their families and maybe an attorney or two. The Israelis are only ever soldiers and judges. Israelis are never prisoners here, which is, at some level, the root of the apartheid system.

Israelis here live under civil law, so they aren't tried in military courts. Palestinians, their neighbors who live right beside them, they live under military law, so they are only ever tried in military courts. Two laws, two people, one place—apartheid.

At the end of that path that seems to take you to nowhere, which, I think, is actually kind of the point—it makes you feel like it's a place where you could disappear—you cross through security, with its usual Byzantine turnstiles and humiliations. And then you find yourself in a somewhere-nowhere—makeshift seating, a big, open awning. It feels a little bit like an oversized bus stop where people are waiting, waiting. There is, behind it, a sort of squat, slapped-together building—four walls and a roof. I don't remember if there was even a bathroom. And that place is full of parents and siblings and aunts and uncles and families—each family, a story—waiting for a person to be tried, sentenced, imprisoned, or, if they're a child, detained under house arrest.

I'm going to let you guess what the conviction rate is—just hold the idea in your head. Do you have it? It's 95 percent: 95 percent of Palestinians here are convicted; 800,000 Palestinians detained since 1967; 700 children a year—that's two children a day, every day. Usually for something like throwing stones.

"They came in the middle of the night. They were screaming," she said. This was a mother. Her boy was taken, and the story is so often the same.

"He was in bed. It was 3:00 in the morning. They took him in the middle of the night. They blindfolded him, handcuffed him, threw him in a military Jeep. But he was sleeping, so they didn't know that he wore glasses."

And then I noticed that she was holding her chest, but what she was really holding was a pair of glasses that was sort of tucked into her lapel.

"I come because I just want to give him his glasses," she said.

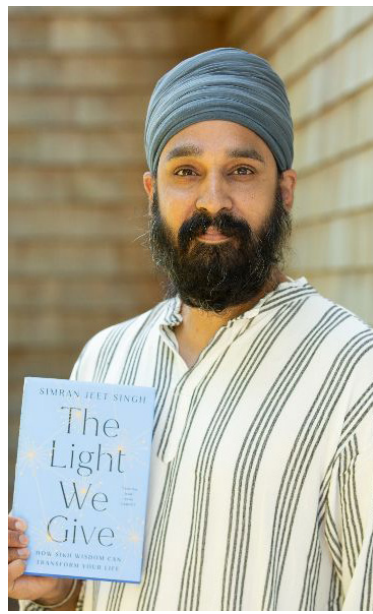
To call them courts is a kind of overstatement. First, there isn't really any justice here. And second, the funny thing is they're little more than shipping containers. They're actually—I promise you—they are corrugated metal on stilts. There are nine of them all lined up, like mobile trailers in a row. It's sort of like a caravan penal system. And they're all meant to look, to appear, to give the illusion of being temporary.

But what temporary? Since 1967, 56 years of temporary?

Read [Kevin Keystone's full reflection](#) at [rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news](#).



Hear more student narratives on displacement and belonging in Israel/Palestine at "[Video: Displacement and Belonging in Israel/Palestine](#)," [rpl.hds.harvard.edu](#), March 29, 2023.



PROFESSIONAL AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Recognizing Professional and Lifelong Learning (PLL) as essential to our theory of change and 10-year vision, RPL Forward envisions a robust role in the delivery of PLL.

We committed to a learning agenda to further deepen our offerings to educators and to develop at least one new PLL offering in a professional field outside education. We also continued to expand the reach of our popular HarvardX courses.

Assessing the Impact of PLL

To inform future PLL development, we assessed the impact of religious literacy PLL offerings provided over the past five years. With the support of an external evaluator, we conducted four listening sessions with past participants in our training programs for high school and community college educators.

RPL's approaches were described as distinctive, transformational, and a "game changer" in opening exploration of topics for which participants had "never had language." Through RPL, participants learned how the rigorous study of religion powerfully informs our understanding of human experience. Participants particularly appreciated RPL's religious literacy frameworks, deep-story approaches, Diane Moore's methodological assumptions (religions are internally diverse, evolve and change over time, and are embedded in all dimensions of culture), and Johan Galtung's typologies of violence (direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence and peace). They cited the distinction between devotional and nondevotional approaches as particularly helpful. The essence of the RPL model was described as teaching "habits of mind" while deepening interpretive skills. RPL's resources—case studies and animated videos—were viewed as particularly helpful as teaching tools in navigating complexity.

"RPL frameworks have been influential in shaping how I view my own area of expertise in law and policy. I see RPL as on the verge of transforming the broader field. RPL chooses justice—but not the way to get there."—LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANT

The results from our assessment informed the expansion of our work with educators as well as the development of new PLL offerings across other professions.

Advancing Religious Literacy with Educators

In July, the annual Summer Institute for Educators took place in an accessible online format, which included both a fully asynchronous option and live programming sessions. The flexible format accommodated nearly 70 participants from across the United States, as well as China, Nigeria, England, Indonesia, and Pakistan. Those participating spent the full month of July engaging with seven course modules prior to meeting online at the start of August.

Live-session programming included presentations from RPL education staff and from RPL Religion and Public Health Fellow Ans Irfan. Irfan spoke about application of the religious literacy method to political contexts outside the United

States and the analytical lens of colonial history in this work. Additional sessions included attention to the arts and imagination, a panel of educators highlighting experiences applying religious literacy frameworks in their classrooms, and opportunities for participants to connect in small groups for lesson planning and classroom applications. A partnership with Framingham State University allowed interested participants to complete an additional final project and earn up to two graduate credits for their work.

A sampling of responses from participating educators:

"I'm so grateful for this time of focused learning, thinking about my own approaches and students, and being inspired by others."

"I was eating that material up and loved it. Posts made me grapple with the important questions and be honest with myself."

"I find the principles most helpful in reframing our overall study of world religions and wish I came across them long ago. The module about how we teach is most helpful in providing language and frameworks for discussing this topic with parents and administrators. It all made sense! I just didn't have the ability to articulate it in such a succinct way. Now I do."

In September, educators were invited to a lunchtime conversation with writer and human rights activist Simran Jeet Singh to discuss his new book, *The Light We Give*, his ongoing work as a public scholar and educator on Sikhism and religious pluralism, and RPL approaches to teaching and learning about religion. Nearly 100 educators registered for the live session and the recording has been viewed over 350 times.

John Camardella, MRPL '22 and RPL Education Program Fellow, designed and led, in partnership with RPL staff, a new introductory religious literacy professional development for secondary school educators. The full-day training was piloted in Lake Park, Chicago, for more than 30 educators, as well as school and district administrative leadership. In addition to deepening their understanding of religious literacy principles, participants identified key elements of department curriculum that would shift in consideration of RPL frameworks and then engaged in collaborative curriculum development.

A sampling of responses from participating educators:

"The overall experience was fantastic. It generated a lot of thought and a ton of conversations as to what are we doing, how are we doing it and why that is the case."

"Clearly based upon the feedback and discussion generated by our group, both of you have inspired us to revisit what we deemed as tried and true methods in an effort to increase engagement. The other tenets of your model then fit within that new mindset and structure."

In May, educators were invited to a webinar conversation between Professor Aprilfaye Manalang of Norfolk State University, Jeanne Shin-Cooper of Buffalo Grove High School in Illinois, and Buffalo Grove High School senior Audrey Ro. Manalang is conducting research on religious identity, grief, and COVID with Filipina-American nurses. Shin-Cooper's students are assisting by conducting interviews. And Audrey Ro, who was a project participant in Shin-Cooper's class, is the co-founder of the school's Asian Student Association.

The discussion explored the dimensions of Manalang and Shin-Cooper's collaboration through RPL and the student impact as experienced by Ro. They discussed Manalang's pedagogical practice of promoting Asian-American understanding at a historically Black university, the process of communicating this research to a public audience via podcast, and Shin-Cooper's experience using religious literacy frameworks to teach about Manalang's research. They also discussed such questions as, "How can religious literacy and a lens of racial justice inform the pandemic stories that we and our students hear, tell, and seek out?" The event was promoted by HDS's Office of Communications in honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Nearly 80 individuals registered for the live session.

"I am highly impressed by the intersectional and inclusive materials that have been incorporated in the RPL modules, which is important to reach a diverse audience and engage my students, who, like me, are often the first in their families to go to college."

"During my first meeting with RPL program specialist Anna Mudd, I expressed my desire to build bridges between my HBCU and Harvard. Thank you for not just allowing me to participate, but to be included and seen. It is clear that RPL is an ally who is intentional in their actions to increase social justice, inclusivity, and to build community." —Aprilfaye Manalang

In April 2023, Westtown, Pennsylvania, teacher Lara Freeman, MTS '06, sat down with RPL graduate assistant Elsa Kunz, MTS '23, to discuss the development of Freeman's semester-long environmental justice elective course. Freeman based the course on the RPL online module "Climate Justice and Religious Literacy." She also used RPL's new, stand-alone case study, "Oil and Christianity in the United States," in her course. Freeman's additional teacher-produced classroom materials will be added to RPL's "Climate Justice and Religious Literacy" module to support further classroom application of this content and approach.

Read about Lara Freeman's experience in "[Religious Literacy Belongs in the Climate Justice Classroom: HDS Alum and Educator Empowers Students by Bringing RPL Frameworks to Life](https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu)" at rpl.hds.harvard.edu.

Creating New Trainings for Educators



RPL partnered with long-time professional development provider Harvard's Global Studies Outreach Committee (GSOC) to offer pedagogical support for a four-day on-campus summer workshop for educators called "Religious Nationalism in a Global Context." The workshop drew nearly 80 applicants from 12 states and will welcome 40 educators to campus. RPL education staff developed a series of pre-workshop modules to introduce participants from around the United States to the frameworks of religious literacy and nationalism and will provide keynote pedagogy talks for the workshop in July 2023.

RPL also developed three new topic-based Capstone modules for educators in response to long-standing interest in a leadership training course for educators to support peer-to-peer introductions to this content. Together, these modules 1) provide an opportunity for teachers to integrate and deepen their understanding of teaching the religious literacy method and to develop leadership capacity in their teaching context, 2) develop the capacity for peer-to-peer training and leadership cohorts within schools and districts and to support educators in the application of religious literacy methods and habits of mind in their classroom, and 3) focus on reflective leadership development that invites educators to consider their personal points of entry and key dimensions of their teaching context. We anticipate piloting these materials in the summer of 2023.

Advancing Religious Literacy across Professions

Public Health

Ans Irfan, MRPL '22 and RPL Religion and Public Health Fellow, together with RPL staff and HDS students, developed an online course providing religious literacy for public health professionals. The course will be piloted next year. The six-module

course focuses on shifting the model of religion in public health as an individual social determinant of health to religion as an embedded and meta-structural determinant of public health. It includes an introduction to religious literacy frameworks, as well as critical exploration of and application to public health premises and case studies. Premises and case studies include coloniality, secularism, national and international health policies, and COVID response.

Foreign Policy

Associate Director for RLPI Susie Hayward engaged in numerous activities throughout the year to advance religious literacy within diplomacy and foreign policy spaces. This included her regular engagement with each incoming class of U.S. Foreign Service Officers (FSO), to whom she presents a half-day introduction to religious literacy for development, diplomacy, and peacebuilding. Hayward facilitated this session for five incoming classes during the academic year, engaging approximately 350 new FSOs now deployed around the world at U.S. embassies. She led a similar session for some 40 members of the European Union's diplomatic corps.

Hayward presented at the U.S. Agency for International Development's 2022 Evidence Summit on Interfaith Action; at an event at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, DC, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the "National Strategy on Integrating Religious Leader and Faith Community Engagement into U.S. Foreign Policy"; and at the Fletcher School's annual Religion, Law, and Diplomacy conference. Her academic webinar on religious literacy for international affairs for the Council on Foreign Relations can be viewed online as a resource for teachers and professors.

Hayward also participated at an expert consultation convened by United Nations' Independent Expert on Freedom from Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Victor Madrigal-Borloz for his June 2023 report on freedom of religion as pertaining to his mandate.

Finally, she co-authored several pieces advancing religious literacy in diplomacy, including a soon-to-be published overview of religion and conflicts in Myanmar, written with Htay Wai Naing for the U.S. Institute of Peace; and a chapter, co-authored with Erin Wilson, assessing the state of scholarship and practice on religion, conflict, and peacebuilding, which can be found on the Joint Learning Initiative website.

HarvardX Open Online Course Enrollments Surpass One Million



Our suite of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) passed a major milestone, with total enrollment across all eight courses since the series launch in 2015 totaling a remarkable 1,038,513 individual enrollments from nearly 200 countries.

To serve this public audience and ongoing demand for opportunities to learn about religious literacy, RPL education staff developed a stand-alone training course for HDS students to become discussion board respondents and moderators. This training module combines an introduction to religious literacy with best practices for responding to the large and diverse public audience that is drawn to the asynchronous learning platform.

Through a co-sponsorship with HarvardX, RPL was also able to open its webinar series Religion and the Legacies of Slavery to MOOC participants, bringing a large, global audience from nearly 80 countries to this critical series of conversations.

RPL continues to receive feedback that these courses are providing a rich source of framing and support to individuals and groups working to advance peace in their local contexts.

A sampling of participant feedback:

"As a multifaith chaplain in a residency program, it will be indispensable for my ministry to have this knowledge in my quiver."

"The course has changed my perception about the global conflicts covered and, most importantly, it will consolidate my belief in peace."

"I am so glad I took this course. It deepened my understanding of the world around me and how religion is embedded in both conflict and peacemaking. The case studies are helpful in gaining insights and deeper perspectives. I also learned from my own local case study. THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!"

We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest

Creating Space for an Honest Reckoning Through Religion and the Legacies of Slavery

BY NATALIE CHERIE CAMPBELL, MTS '18

“That which touches me most is that I had a chance to work with people
Passing onto others that which was passed onto me.
Not needing to clutch for power. Not needing the light just to shine on me.
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny.
Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize
That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives
We who believe in freedom cannot rest.
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.”

“Ella's Song” by Sweet Honey in the Rock opened each of the six sessions of the Harvard Divinity School (HDS) webinar series, “Religion and the Legacies of Slavery,” setting an expectation for all those present. This series of six critical conversations that were built upon the *The Legacy of Slavery at Harvard: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Committee* would be more than academically rigorous. It would be a place where personal reckoning became a community struggle.

The Religion and the Legacies of Slavery series reached an unprecedented scale for the divinity school, with 2,000 unique registrants (many of whom attended multiple sessions) from 75 countries. However, the vision for the series was inspired by a far more intimate space: the HDS Common Read community.

Envisioned by Melissa Wood Bartholomew, associate dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DIB), and facilitated by the HDS DIB office with the support of the HDS Racial Justice and Healing committee, the Common Read program is a recurring community-wide, year-long series of reorientations and common conversations. The program is centered around a shared text to help HDS advance its vision of a restorative, anti-racist, and anti-

oppressive HDS. *The Legacy of Slavery at Harvard Report* was the 2022–23 common-read book and now serves as the DIB office's foundational text. This work aims to support the HDS community's transformative journey, to help the University implement and expand upon the recommendations in the report, and ultimately to foster a world healed of racism and oppression.

It was reading the report for the Common Read and engaging in the corresponding community circle conversations that prompted Diane L. Moore, associate dean of Religion and Public Life, to ask herself a simple but powerful question: “What can Religion and Public Life (RPL) offer in the restorative work of creating a world healed of racism and oppression?”

RPL seeks to create programming that enhances the public understanding of how religious literacy can help build a just world at peace. Moore imagined a series that would uplift the work already happening at HDS by bringing together RPL frameworks, DIB's Common Read, and faculty research in a way that would both educate and ignite the moral imagination of the public.

The Religion and the Legacies of Slavery series held a sense of urgency, purpose, and collaboration that caught hold of everyone who heard about it, elevating it far beyond our expectations through co-sponsorship with the DIB office, Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Initiative, and HarvardX as well as consistent coverage by the Harvard *Crimson*. But this sort of thing doesn't just happen. One must already be engaged in work of deep moral fortitude and seeking opportunities to build community for serendipitous and providential moments to unfold. That magical moment when everything clicks to bring about something new and profoundly necessary is exactly what this series was, and it happened because



people were already engaged and ready to collaborate at every juncture.

Opening the first session of Religion and the Legacies of Slavery, Sara Bleich, inaugural vice provost for special projects, in particular the Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Initiative, reflected on the importance of such a series, saying, “We don’t have a guidebook for exactly how we

“We don’t have a guidebook for exactly how we need to reckon with Harvard’s legacies of slavery. But what is clear is that the work of repair begins with having the difficult but necessary conversations”

need to reckon with Harvard’s legacies of slavery. But what is clear is that the work of repair begins with having the difficult but necessary conversations, like the ones that will happen through this innovative webinar series.”

Moore reflects, “Performative action itself is a form of violence, so this series, with all the difficulties of large-scale, online interaction, had to engage these topics sincerely and rigorously. My good friend Melissa Wood Bartholomew’s presence was pivotal in this because her immense integrity creates a container in which we can have such conversations.”

“Co-creating spaces where these hard conversations are possible requires being in right relationship with someone who is deeply committed to this hard work” explains Bartholomew. “I am a Black woman descended from Africans who were enslaved in this country. This history is difficult, and the current manifestations of this painful history made holding the space every Monday emotionally challenging. I was ready for it, and this is what I came to Harvard to do. But I can’t have that kind of conversation and hold that type of space with just anyone. Diane and I had a relationship beforehand, and based on our prior experiences together, I knew that she was committed to this work and that I could trust her.”

Together Moore and Bartholomew were able to tackle questions like how to create a space that acknowledged the land and people, including the more than 70 people of African and Indigenous descent who were enslaved

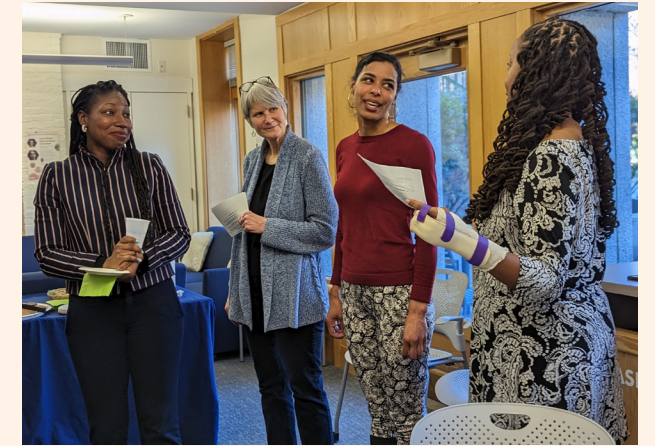
at Harvard University, in a way that went beyond words and into action, and how to facilitate both an internal reckoning for those present and an external reckoning of the tangled histories and legacies of slavery through the study of religion.

“Because Diane and I come to the table from different entry points, together we could create a unique approach that stemmed from both the head and the heart,” Bartholomew explains. “This work isn’t done by just thinking or just feeling. It requires a collaboration of the two. You can’t just think your way through this hard history, you have to also allow yourself to feel it. Allowing ourselves to think and feel our way through the heart will help us to create new pathways to freedom and liberation—that is transformative praxis.”

The approach to these types of conversations is crucial to Terrence L. Johnson, Charles G. Adams Professor of African American Religious Studies, and featured faculty for the session, “Memory, History, and the Ethics of Reparations.”

“I want to create a framework of engagement that allows us to change the starting point and then re-enter the debate to generate conversation that is not simply about reports or the archives,” he says. “We can contemplate, debate, and piece together new information. But I believe we’ve come to a particular moment in history in which we must think about how we reimagine institutional cultures and new traditions. Without practices of habit, without rethinking what we take for granted (what’s fundamental about our institutions) then this conversation is simply an intellectual exercise that will not have any merit on the ground.”

“Religion has always functioned to promote the full range of human agency from heinous crimes against humanity, such as slavery, to nearly unfathomable acts of courage, compassion, and moral imagination, such as enacting reparations for stolen lands and labor.” Moore explains. “By understanding this power, we hope to give audience members tools to confront the harmful impacts of religion and to enhance the generative capacities in their own lives and contacts, whether they identify as religious or not.”



“A primary way we understand the power of religion is by addressing deeply embedded assumptions about religion that are problematic and unquestioned.” Moore continues. “Religion and Public Life realizes that these assumptions don’t exist because people aren’t capable of understanding complexity. Rather, there are simply too few opportunities for people to be exposed to the study of religion and not just one’s own experience of religion.”

In the session, “Enslavement in the Formation of Earliest Christianity,” Karen King, Hollis Professor of Divinity, framed the practice of engaging with complexity as “an opportunity for accountability.”

“The Bible does not tell a single coherent or consistent message about enslavement. Therefore, people are accountable for how they interpret and live out the teachings of the Bible. It matters what stories are told. It matters that they are diverse, that they are complex, and that they’re true,” King says.

“By engaging in a practice of interrogating our assumptions, what stories are or are not being told, interpretations and their consequences, we can cultivate both a humility and a courage built on the understanding that actions do have consequences,” King concludes.

“This denaturalizing of assumption is not paralyzing. It is in fact empowering. Assuming the world that we’ve inherited had to be as it is rather than recognizing it as the product of choices and as one option among a number of contingencies—that is what is paralyzing,” says David F. Holland, John A. Bartlett Professor of New England

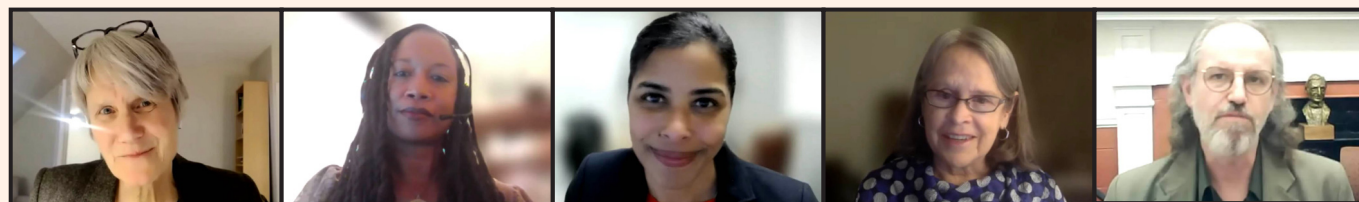
Church History, and featured faculty along with scholar Kathryn Gin Lum in the session, “Religion, Race and the Double Helix of White Supremacy.” “When we recognize that there were paths not taken, that there were choices resulting in the things that we’ve inherited, that the contingency of history actually produces the opportunity to act in our present, we recognize and are reminded that we have an opportunity to shift the arc of history as well.”

“If we are to unravel these devastating legacies, we need to have a clear understanding of their origin stories.” Holland says, “And the study of religion is an appropriate, maybe the appropriate disciplinary site for an exploration of the connection between binary religious thinking and the power dynamics of racialized colonialism, especially as it relates to the Atlantic system of African slavery and its enduring consequences.”

Read the full article, [“We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest,”](https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news) at rpl.hds.harvard.edu/news.

Read reflections from Jude Ayua, MTS ’24, on Karen L. King’s Religion and the Legacies of Slavery event in [“Interpreting Stories of Enslavement in the New Testament,”](https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu) rpl.hds.harvard.edu, February 13, 2023.

Read reflections from Morgan Curtis, MTS ’23, on Dan McKanan’s Religion and the Legacies of Slavery event and on her work moving inherited family wealth toward racial reparations in [“How Family History Can Inspire Accountable Reparations and Foster Ancestral Healing,”](https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu) rpl.hds.harvard.edu, March 6, 2023.





RPL IN THE NEWS

[“Student Profile: Phillip Picardi, MRPL ’22,”](#) hds.harvard.edu, November 3, 2022.

Former chief content officer at *Teen Vogue*, Phillip Picardi is one of the inaugural MRPL graduates.

[“Meet Jews for Liberation, the HDS Student Group Bringing Politics and Spirituality Together,”](#) *The Harvard Crimson*, December 1, 2022.

Jewish students at Harvard Divinity School discuss their new student organization, Jews for Liberation.

[“Harvard Divinity School Hosts Conversation on the Presence of Enslavement in Early Christian Stories,”](#) *The Harvard Crimson*, February 1, 2023.

Highlight of the first event in the RPL co-sponsored Religion and the Legacies of Slavery series, led by HDS professor Karen L. King.

[“Harvard Divinity School Senior Lecturer Discusses Role of Slavery in School’s Founding,”](#) *The Harvard Crimson*, February 15, 2023.

Highlight of the third event in the RPL co-sponsored Religion and the Legacies of Slavery series, led by HDS professor Dan McKanan.

[“Harvard Divinity School Professor Discusses Religion and the Movement for Reparations at HDS Webinar,”](#) *The Harvard Crimson*, February 28, 2023.

Highlight of the fourth event in the RPL co-sponsored Religion and the Legacies of Slavery series, led by HDS professor Terrence Johnson.

[“Husband Descended From Slave-Trading Family and Wife Whose Ancestors Were Enslaved Speak at HDS Event,”](#) *The Harvard Crimson*, March 7, 2023.

Highlight of the fifth event in the RPL co-sponsored Religion and the Legacies of Slavery series, led by HDS professor Tracey Hucks, who interviewed Dain and Constance Perry.

[“Harvard Divinity School Faculty Discuss Teaching the Legacy of Slavery,”](#) *The Harvard Crimson*, March 21, 2023.

Highlight of the sixth and final event in the RPL co-sponsored Religion and the Legacies of Slavery series, featuring the series’ faculty speakers and moderated by Faculty Director of Religion and Public Life Diane L. Moore and Associate Dean of the HDS Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Melissa Wood Bartholomew.

[“With Climate Justice Week, Anna Del Castillo, MDiv ’21, Brings Hope into Grief,”](#) hds.harvard.edu, April 4, 2023.

RPL climate justice researcher speaks on the impetus for and purpose of Climate Justice Week, a student initiative co-sponsored by RPL.

[“The Climate Crisis Is a Spiritual Crisis,”](#) *The Harvard Crimson*, April 7, 2023.

Opinion piece by RPL climate justice researcher Anna Del Castillo and student Maya Pace, MTS ’23, covering the crucial place of religion and spirituality in the climate crisis conversation.

[“Sights and Sounds: Climate Justice Week,”](#) hds.harvard.edu, April 27, 2023.

A photo essay of the events of Climate Justice Week, with audio reflections from the organizers.



Associate Dean of Religion and Public Life

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