



# The OU MIX: Community News

## **Summer Study Travel Journey:** *What everyone knows about...*

This past year participants travelled domestically to explore a very American experience of the African and Jewish American experiences. 15 students traveled through NYC, DC, and cities throughout Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee to explore the historical oppression of their respective groups through slavery, racism, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

Students also learned of the alliances and collaborations the two communities have shared through the years that have made the relationship a powerful force. By learning about the roots of racial conflicts in the United States, participants are able to draw parallels with issues of racism, bigotry, anti-Semitism and even bullying today. Our students learned life-lessons about how their similarities far outweigh than their differences.

## **In the community:** *What everyone should know about...*

Just since September, OU '09 has worked with over 800 people in the Philadelphia area to build bridges of commonality and respect for difference. Following are some voices and highlights of the past year:

- Travis Anderson-Hamilton '08 accepted a full scholarship to Harvard University:

*"Before OU I would never have even thought I could apply to Harvard – but now...OU has just opened up an entirely different world for me." – Travis Anderson-Hamilton '08*

- Franklin & Marshall College will draw on their OU trained - native talent, Sam Weinstock '08, Sam Klehr '07 and Kendra White '06 to facilitate activities on campus during their annual commemoration of the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Brandee Blocker '07, Raffi Greenberg '07 and Zoe Greenberg '08 joined together at Yale University to raise awareness about a campus sponsored event that unintentionally threatened to reflect slavery in a positive light. Their letter writing campaign and meetings with event organizers effected a change in the theme and generated a public apology.
- Tali Fish '09, captain of her field hockey team at Central High School, was commended for her leadership in creating a more unified hockey team than has been seen in recent history.

*"I can spread Operation Understanding's message every day, through my attitude or in a word that I say to someone to help unite my field hockey team. I didn't before, but now I see it as my role to stand up and get involved." - Talia Fish '09*

From our workshops:

*"Anjerie and Bijan...were clever and extraordinary representatives of Operation Understanding. I hope you know how truly grateful we are to you and Operation Understanding for your continued willingness to educate our students about your work specifically and as an inspirational illustration of devotion to progressive social change. (Please accept)...this testimony as to how far your efforts reach." – Deborah Leibel, The Philadelphia Center*



Students meet with Mayor Young, of Philadelphia Mississippi, the city's first African American mayor.

Operation Understanding is proud to have been asked to participate in and lead a special project for the Philadelphia King Day of Service this year. Along with this noted assignment this year's class will continue their work in schools, churches, synagogues and community centers spreading a message of cross-cultural understanding reaching over 2,000 community members. Following is an abbreviated list of schools, religious and community centers that have welcomed or will be welcoming Operation Understanding students and their message of diversity and acceptance.

### **Bring Operation Understanding students to your school!**

Academy of Notre Dame  
Beth Tikvah Synagogue  
Brith Shalom House  
Bright Hope Baptist Church  
Constitution High  
Central High School  
Imhotep Institute  
International Visitors Center  
Penn Charter High School  
Mishkan Shalom Congregation  
Julia R. Masterman High School  
JCC Klein Branch  
The Philadelphia Center  
Friends Central School  
Motivation High School  
Friends Select School  
George Washington High School  
George Washington Carver High School of Engineering and Science  
Rodeph Shalom Congregation and Hebrew School  
Upper Moreland High School



#### ***Moving On: What you need to know!***

Operation Understanding is proud to congratulate members of our OU '09 class on their acceptance to college early decision. All five that applied early decision to the University of Pennsylvania will be attending in the fall!

Operation Understanding makes a difference...long-term. In speaking with alumni each week I hear the heartfelt gratitude; learn about deep long-standing relationships; and listen to anecdotes about how years later, our alumni credit Operation Understanding as a major influence on the trajectory of their careers, their attitudes about how to operate in the world and their commitment to the community.

Our alumni Teach for America and toil in the Peace Corps. They are founders, doctors, lawyers and business people committed to their communities. The following alumni are a small part of a large cadre of leaders in their fields that credit Operation Understanding as a major positive long-term influence in their lives.

Rafiq Jeffries Kalam Id-Din, Esq. OU '91 is an Echoing Green Fellow and the founder and managing partner of Teaching Firms of America Charter Schools in Brooklyn.

Ellen Rosenberg OU '00 founded CHOSA (Children of South Africa), an organization that raises funds and awareness for orphans and other vulnerable children in South Africa.  
Loree Jones OU '85 a former managing director of the City of Philadelphia, was named Co-Executive Director of City Year of Greater Philadelphia  
Cynthia Gordy OU '98 accepted the position of assistant editor at ESSENCE magazine in DC where she is their first ever White House correspondent.  
Michael Rubin OU '89, a Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute on policy issues in Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

In the news: Malika Saada Saar OU '87 advocate, activist, DC insider and A-lister was recently profiled in the Washington Post for her work with The Rebecca Project for Human Rights, a national legal and policy organization that advocates for public policy reform, justice and dignity for vulnerable families.

We're proud of all of our alumni, their bonds with one another, their commitment to the community and Operation Understanding. Our alumni are a committed network of professionals that are there for our young students as they learn to see the world through Operation Understanding eyes.

This year Operation Understanding will be celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of developing young African American and Jewish leaders to forge cross-cultural ties and build bridges of acceptance and understanding between communities. We look forward to the next 25 years and invite you to join the celebration!

Best wishes for a happy new year!

Allison Pokras  
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Saada Saar and Rebecca Project consultant Autumn VandeHei consider themselves "co-madres," both nurturing support for their group. (Evy Mages for The Washington Post)

**Applications are due January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010.**  
**Please feel free to call 215-665-8575 with any questions or visit**  
**www.operationunderstanding.org**

FAQ on applications and process:

- Must be postmarked by January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010
- Can be faxed in but must be followed by a hard copy by mail.
- Don't forget a photo!
- Supporting documentation (recommendations and transcripts) **MUST** be in the office by January 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Invitations for an interview will be released by January 28<sup>th</sup>. **Please check your email.**
- If invited for an interview, you and your parent/guardians will be invited to pre-orientation on February 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm. Attendance with at least one guardian is required, location TBA.

*Promoting cross-cultural harmony and leadership*

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