AGS Grad Goes to Prison—on a human rights tour

Not many people voluntarily go to prison, but in a recent human rights tour of Europe, AGSIRD graduate Omar Bandar (Class of 2004) did just that.

Omar Bandar, a strong advocate of human rights in places of detention, recently embarked on an 11-country, 50-day European tour on human rights and prisons. He visited detention centers in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe calling for municipal governments to petition the leaders of their countries to sign on to international monitoring commitments, like the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

During this tour he exchanged ideas with representatives of international NGOs like Penal Reform International, Prison Fellowship International, and the Association for the Prevention of Torture; as well as governmental organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, and the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture. He also met with scholars from think tanks and academic institutions like the Max Planck Institute for Foreign & International Criminal Law, and Kings College’s Center for International Prison Studies. To get a better understanding of the domestic challenges in maintaining human rights in places of detention, he met with governmental representatives from several countries such as the Scottish Prison Service, the Norwegian Parliament’s Justice Committee and Ministry of Finance, the Estonian Ministry of Justice, and the Latvian and Dutch Probation Services.

Out of all of these meetings Omar found that the most memorable parts of the tour were the conversations he had with inmates, prison guards, and wardens, as well as the images of sickly looking prisoners and overcrowded living conditions in archaic facilities. “At one point,” Omar said, “when I was visiting the Murrup prison in Estonia, I was flanked by three guards as we squeezed down a narrow hallway filled with inmates coming and going. Unhealthily thin and pale looking...
inmates slowly pressed past us and each other. When I asked why there were so many inmates seemingly en route to one place or another, I was told that the narrow hallway doubles as the inmate’s indoor recreation area."

In a conversation at a prison in Latvia the warden confirmed that the prison administration was incapable of implementing some of the Council of Europe’s suggested reforms due to the physical structures of the antiquated prisons. Omar asked, “How can a prison, designed and built in the Soviet era under a ‘lock ’em up and throw away the key’ philosophy, convert the ‘brick and mortar’ facilities to conform to international human rights standards and contemporary rehabilitative practices? This would require a significant amount of public resources to be devoted to a segment of the population that much of society has, even in the U.S. and Western Europe, written off as undeserving – inmates. But what should guide society in making these types of decisions is the idea that globally, the vast majority of individuals that are incarcerated will one day re-enter the very communities from which they have come, and when they do, is it better that they are more, or less dangerous then when they went in?"

Omar is writing a book about his European tour, and has partnered with a former prison guard, law enforcement officer, and probation and parole officer to launch a criminal justice focused consulting firm. Among other issues, Omar will be consulting on how domestic correctional institutions can adopt successful international rehabilitative methods.

### AGSIRD News

#### Human Rights Watch Conference

AGSIRD and the Université de Cergy-Pontoise co-hosted a conference on November 5th with the non-governmental international organization Human Rights Watch. The speaker Lotte Leicht, EU director of HRW, discussed ways of implementing standards of human rights by offering incentives: financial or commercial; or through penal sanctions or embargos.

#### Earning a Double Degree

More and more AGS students are earning a double degree in two years by entering the master’s program in Diplomatie et Négociations Stratégiques at the Université de Paris-Sud XI (Sceaux). The culmination of the year’s work is a simulation negotiation conference held in May in prestigious surroundings: Strasbourg, France, 2003; Beirut, Lebanon, 2004; Paris, France, 2005; Tangers, Morocco, 2006; Alexandria, Egypt, 2007. The venue was Athens, Greece in May 2008.

### Nicolette Bundy (Class of 2008):

“I really loved participating in the Sceaux program last year. For me, it was the high point of my year. It was a fascinating experience to step into the shoes of an “Iranian diplomat” and I found myself at times becoming, despite myself, rather impassioned in my speeches and genuinely frustrated with what I really felt was aggressive militarism from the “United States” representative! The Greece trip was really a high point too—Athens is lovely and our sessions in the Greek Parliament building were rather intense. I nearly managed to block the whole procedure at the very end, because Iran felt it wasn’t getting its rightful due in the final negotiated settlement.

The picture here shows fellow "Iranian" Ghaydaa Hdayed, from Lebanese American University, Beirut and I considering proposed "bilateral accords" from Russia and China.

### Undergraduate Programs

Arcadia University’s Center for Education Abroad sent 11 undergraduate students to AGSIRD last July for a month-long summer program in Paris. The students had French courses with the Alliance Française in the mornings and a core course entitled ‘History, Politics and Diplomacy of France and the European Union’ at AGSIRD in the afternoons.

The program was a success and AGSIRD will now welcome undergraduates in fall, spring and summer. In addition to French and the core course, the semester programs will offer: ‘International Law’, ‘Clash of Cultures’, ‘Modern French Thought’ and ‘Current Issues in International Relations.’

### Graduate Semester Abroad

A degree requirement for students studying towards a Master’s in International Peace Conflict Resolution at Arcadia University is that they spend one semester abroad. This fall Timothy McGowan joined us at AGS. He gives us an account of his experiences.

I arrived in Paris at the beginning of September with the same feelings of nervousness and anxiety that I suppose anyone arriving for an extended period of time in a foreign country has. I still smile when I think back to my first month here: I walked up five flights of stairs in my new dormitory building dragging my suitcase because I had not understood the directions to the elevators; my first shower was in chillingly cold water; I laugh at my first attempts to speak French in cafes, and at how I ate chicken for a week because it was the only food I was able to ask for.

But when my time here is over, I will be taking with me warm memories of my experience in France. I’ve made many new friends; I owe so much to the AGS students, and to locals too, who adopted me when I was clearly out of my element. It is with these new friends that I spent many of my fondest moments: staying up until 5am to..."
watch the Presidential election results come in, spending a weekend in a castle in the Loire Valley, wine tasting in the French countryside, biking several kilometers from the train station to Monet’s Gardens, wine and cheese parties at AGS.

A semester abroad forces you to experience what you can in too short a time. You can embrace the foreign culture and learn as much as you can about it—and about yourself—or you can let it pass you by. As I reflect over my time here, I know I have made the most out of this once in a lifetime experience. Now I want to remain in this city and this country that I have come to think of as home and not merely as a destination for study.

### Student News

**Rasha Jasser** married Antoine Nivot on 12th July 2008, in Clarac, a little town near the city of Toulouse. “It was a small wedding that we shared with immediate family and friends—some of my fellow students from AGS drove for eight hours to be with us at our wedding.

We tried to make it a mix of an American wedding and a French wedding; for example the main course served at the wedding dinner was a choice of real American Bacon Cheese Burgers or Magret de Canard. It was a rainy wedding but a beautiful one and besides the weather everything ran smoothly. As they say in France: “mariage pluvieux, mariage heureux” (“rainy wedding, happy marriage.”)

**Elizabeth Milovidov, Ph.D. candidate** writes: “Thanks to Dr. Servidio, I have found THE perfect way to balance my lifestyle and have it all. I am able to raise my adorable 21 month old son, do research, write and actually finish my doctoral dissertation by next year, earn money AND stay in touch with legal and business issues. I am a professor in the Anglo-American law program that Dr. Servidio runs at the University of Cergy Law School. I am teaching American Constitutional Law, American Civilization, American Corporate Law and Introduction to the American Legal System to French students (Undergraduate and Master’s level). Thanks Dr. Servidio for having confidence in me!

I am also teaching at Ran University, Touro College, Paris. It is the Parisian branch of an American private university. I am teaching Fundamentals of Speech (Beginners and Advanced levels) and Principles of Management.

Overall, I am thoroughly enjoying this deviation from my strictly in-house legal experience and I’m hoping that within the next few years, (after I get that Ph.D. thing squared away) I’ll add teaching a ‘Children’s Rights and the Law’ course to my list. I’ll keep you and the AGSer posted!”

### Settling in .........!

**Meredith Railey** writes: This year’s new students come from a variety of different places and backgrounds, and for many it was their first time in Paris. One thing that was inescapable for all of us was the seemingly insurmountable amounts of bureaucracy we faced upon arrival, but we bonded as we swapped stories and tips about the fastest way to obtain a “carte de séjour” and the most painless way to open a bank account or rent an apartment. Here are a few “settling in” experiences:

**Amandine Muskus** is French, but has spent a large portion of her adult life living abroad. Her “settling in” experience caused her to ponder what it really meant to call somewhere home, and where her home really was. She realized on her return here, that France was indeed her home, and that she had found her place within the AGS community. She says, “[It was] not simply the country but the friends that I have made at AGS, and all of the little wonders that make you want to wake up in the morning to your tartine and coffee.”

**Verena Büharitsch** from Austria came straight to Paris after finishing her last semester of undergraduate school studying abroad in Barcelona. After a quick stop in Austria to unpack, repack, and head to Paris, she arrived to her new apartment to find a broken window, broken bunk-bed ladder, and horrifying stench. After a couple of IKEA trips and some heavy cleaning, Verena now feels very much at home in Paris, and laughs when she tells the story of her first glance into her cozy Parisian flat.

**Amber French** originally from the New Orleans area, spent her last days of summer vacation in the Basque region of Southern France. There she tasted some of the best known regional foods, including a dinner entrée consisting of five different types of fish. Two days after Amber returned to Paris from her vacation, she read that suspected terrorists, members of the ETA (a Basque separatist movement), had been arrested in the neighboring city of Bayonne, which she had visited just days before. She said, “It was a meaningful reminder that the studies I was about to embark upon have everyday value; not only can we AGSers appreciate the cultural aspects of the parts of the world we visit, but we can also consider the deeper questions underlying the vastly different societies in which we might find ourselves.”
A Castle for the Weekend

This year’s student trip was spent in a beautiful chateau in the midst of the Loire Valley. Famous for its numerous castles, excellent wine, and religious architecture, this beautiful region used to be the main stomping grounds for kings, princes, and other nobility from the 15th to the 18th centuries. On Friday afternoon students headed off in cars from Paris, ready to spend a long relaxing weekend in a rented castle near Poitiers.

It was a great experience being able to stay in a real castle and we made use of the grand 18-person table to dine together. We enjoyed a nice weekend getting to know each other a little better, and ate and drank well. There was a general consensus that we all love living in Paris, but that it’s necessary to get out from time to time to keep your sanity. And the countryside with its tranquility, beautiful landscape, stars, and people who stare at us even more than in Paris because we’re les étrangers, make it a great place to spend a weekend.

Some highlights of the trip include: the huge fortress sitting atop the hill in Chillon overlooking the medieval village and the river, a small local Christmas market that we just happened to stumble upon in Saint Epain, a private wine tasting at the residence of a wine producer, a brewery tour, seeing amazing castles everywhere, and getting to compare everyone’s dancing skills. It was a success.

Election Night!

AGS students followed the Presidential election campaign with great enthusiasm. On the night of the election they got together in cafés, cinemas, at the gala night held in the U.S. Embassy, co-held by Democrats Abroad France and Republicans Abroad France, and in other venues where Americans gathered, to watch the results come in and to wish their candidate to victory. This is an account of how one American in Paris, student Jennifer Wright, spent that night with her friends.

After twenty never ending months of closely following the Presidential Campaign’s twist and turns, the 44th President of the United States was chosen and history was made. And not only was a president chosen, but the best man for the job, and someone who has inspired millions and millions of Americans to get out and vote and actively participate in the campaign, most of whom had never done so before. This marks an amazing turning point in history, and this is our time.

Wanting to celebrate the making of history, and show our love for Obama, a group of us AGSers participated in the Election Night Gala at the U.S. Embassy venue at Trocadero

The doors opened at 10:30, and drinks and a buffet were offered throughout the night, to keep our cheering and energy levels up as we watched the live TV coverage and saw the results come in state by state. There were ten big screens and two screening theaters spread throughout the venue which were broadcasting CNN and other international media. The French media were covering the Gala event too.

Adding to the excitement were the interviews being conducted with AGS professors that could be seen in the background, and were being broadcast from local French TV networks.

Sleeping was definitely not an option this night, we had long planned to get together to celebrate Barack Obama being elected the next president. Despite having to watch the election night results come in on Fox News (ironic?), all in all it was a great evening and a great opportunity to take part in celebrating this amazing turn in history with other Americans all the way over here in Paris. I know I will always remember this night and exactly where I was and who I was with when the first black president of the United States was elected. After watching President-Elect Obama’s acceptance speech, we finally strolled out of the Gala around 6am in awe.

Another piece of awesomeness at the Gala (besides Obama) was that bagels were served throughout the night!

Discussion with Kofi Annan

On November 17th, AGS students attended a discussion with former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan on the theme ‘Africa, the New Frontier’. This was part of a series called ‘Forum for New Diplomacy’ organized by the Académie Diplomatie Internationale in partnership with the International Herald Tribune. The purpose of these discussions is to explore the emerging dynamics shaping our world today with leading figures in international affairs as well as senior editors and columnists from the IHT and the New York Times.
Dr. Arun Kapil joined AGS this fall as Professor of International Politics of the Modern Middle East. He brings a wealth of experience and passion to this field.

Dr. Kapil had a rather unconventional youth. He was raised in a liberal academic family in the Midwest. His father was Indian and his mother American. The academic research of his father took the family abroad frequently. They traveled extensively and spent two years in Somalia. However, it was the family’s stay in Turkey for four years in his early teens that fostered Dr. Kapil’s interest in the Middle East. He remembers, “My father had Palestinian students, so I became aware of the Arab/Israeli conflict. In 1969 he took me on a trip to Beirut, where we drove past a refugee camp for Palestinians; the image stuck with me.” He finished high school in a suburb of Chicago, where he found himself constantly trying to explain the Palestinian perspective to his Jewish friends there. This gave him more understanding of both sides of the conflict.

Dr. Kapil obtained his B.A. from Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago. He worked as a journalist, participated in local and national political campaigns, and did immigration and social service work in Chicago thus developing his life-long involvement in politics. In 1989-90 he was in Algeria as a Fulbright Scholar doing field work for his doctoral dissertation on political liberalization in that country. Then he moved into a career in academia.

His fields of specialization and interest are international relations, the politics of the Middle East, North Africa and France; international migration, immigration, and ethnicity; as well as electoral politics (particularly in the United States and Europe).

Recently, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State, Dr. Kapil spent two weeks in the Congo Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Cameroon, giving lectures and media interviews on the American electoral process and current presidential campaign.

Regarding teaching the Middle East and the Arab/Israeli conflict, Dr. Kapil says, “I love this subject! I understand that it is a sensitive topic, which often makes it difficult to teach. People get very passionate about it. I try to be objective, fair, and neutral. I see that both sides have very strong arguments, depending on what facets of the argument we talk about. My own views have been evolving for years.”

Dr. Kapil lives in Paris with his family; although he still considers Chicago his adoptive city in the United States. He is thrilled that fellow Chicagoan Barack Obama will be the next president of the United States. He also teaches at the Paris Center for Critical Studies (CIEE), the American University of Paris and at the Faculté de Sciences Sociales et Economiques of the Institut Catholique de Paris.

The culmination of M.A. studies at AGSIRD is the writing and defending a substantial thesis. Here is a sampling of the topics that were written about by last year’s graduating students:

- The Origins and Evolution of Microfinance in Mexico: From a Culture of Credit to a Culture of Savings.
- Multilateralism? Militarism? Isolationism? How do the most Widely-used High School U.S. History Textbooks Portray U.S. Foreign Policy Beliefs?
- Modernist Feminists versus Traditional Feminists: Preservation of Cultural and Religious Identity through Protests against Women's Rights in Morocco.
- Is the International Relations theory of Holistic Constructivism the most useful Theoretical Tool to Analyze the Direction of United States Foreign Policy in Recent Years, Particularly since the Accession to the Presidency of George W. Bush?
- Kosovo: Education as the Conflict's Catalyst? A Constructive Perspective.
- Is Daily Newspaper Coverage of Angela Merkel in Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States Gender-biased?
- Glass Slipper or Glass Ceiling? The Impact of Economic Liberalization and European Integration on the Position of Women in the Transition Economy of Romania and its Implications for the Promotion of Gender Equality.
- News or Propaganda: The Failure of America’s Mass Media in the Lead Up to the 2003 Iraq War.
- A Political Risk Analysis of the Geopolitics of IPI and TA-PI Pipelines.
Dr. David Pike has been working to compile AGSIRD’s new research project, the collective work Crimes against Women, which is finally completed and is currently under review by the University of Rochester Press, New York. Edited by David Pike (the AGS director of research), it contains 28 chapters written by 24 contributors from around the globe, including four AGS Faculty members (Eileen Servidio-Delabre, Ruchi Anand, Sir Christopher Macrae, and David Pike).

David Pike’s book Franco and the Axis Stigma (Macmillan, 2008), which deals in part with Poland’s agony in September 1939, will be translated into Polish by Dom Wydawniczy Bellona (Warsaw). Meanwhile Dr. Pike has been selected by the Holland America Line to be (again) its guest lecturer aboard the Prinzendam on its Grand Mediterranean Voyage in April 2009.

Professor Joav Toker is a regular contributor to radio and television programs. Over the past few months: he has appeared on the international TV France 24 and on French radio BFM giving commentaries on the U.S. Presidential election; he also participated in "Kiosque" on TV Monde commenting and debating foreign policy issues.

Dr. Paul Vallet has made frequent television appearances over the past few months. On 13 July he gave a live commentary to Al Jazeera English from the opening of the Euro-Mediterranean Summit at the Grand Palais.

Since July he has made eleven appearances on France 24, in English and in French, on topics ranging from French constitutional reform to the war in Afghanistan, the opening of the UN General Assembly and the primary and final stages of the US presidential campaign.

Dr. Steven McGiffen was in London in June to address an international conference hosted by British transport labor union RMT. The conference, on “Campaigning against rail privatization in Europe” was attended by over 100 labor unionists from as far afield as Turkey and Latvia. Dr. McGiffen, who shared the platform with leading British labor lawyer John Hendy and Rene Roovers, an advisor on employment issues to Members of the European Parliament, was asked to speak on the ideology driving the current privatization drive and its international roots. “They wanted some broad background before the other two speakers homed in on the details,” he explains, “and they knew me through my book on the EU as well as through individual officers of the union whom I’ve come across in the past, when I worked at the European Parliament. This is the second time they have invited me, which is always a good sign!”

Professor’s Viewpoint

Water and Sanitation MDG: PUPs can Deliver

By Dr. Steven McGiffen

As I explained in The AGSer, Spring 2008, I do not believe privatization can make any contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goal on water, although I fully recognize that publicly-owned water companies in developing countries are often inefficient and even corrupt. History has shown, however, that the involvement of TransNational Corporations (TNC’s) increases rather than reduces these problems.

The way to address this inefficiency and corruption is, firstly, to ensure that aid moneys are made available to publicly-owned water companies and that these companies are held to the same standards of transparency and honest trading as prevail in the best-practice donor countries. Secondly, the capacity of public water companies in developing countries to raise their standards can be enhanced by improving their accountability through broadening popular participation, involving people as both citizens and consumers. Donor countries can encourage this by making the expertise and experience of their own public water companies available through ‘PUPs’—‘Public–Public Partnerships’.

Endorsed by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development as key tools for expanding clean water and sanitation in developing countries, PUPs have been used successfully in several new member states of the EU. For example, Stockholm’s public water company worked with PUPs in a number of cities in the Baltic States in order to enable them to meet EU water standards prior to accession. Undoubtedly Sweden directly profited in this case due to their need to clean up the Baltic Sea, but there is no reason why development aid should not be used for the same purpose. Technology and know-how transfer, efficient management and socially equitable billing practices are at the center of the PUPs strategy, and these are surely worthy development goals where dirty water and lack of sanitation are major causes of disease and infant mortality.

Privatization can in any case only be achieved in poor countries by use of development moneys, some of which will therefore end up in the pockets of the TNCs and their shareholders. This way, your tax dollar or tax euro, that goes to fund development aid, actually reaches the people it is designed to help.

Europe’s Poisoned Spring, by Kartika Liotard and Steven P. McGiffen, will be published in May, 2009 by Pluto Press (London).
A Job in the South

By Katie Villegas (Class of 2004)

I knew nowhere could compare with the Paris I was leaving, but I figured that back in the U.S., I would settle in some place like California where being close to another country, I might get an “international” type job. Well, things worked out differently and I ended up in Durham, North Carolina, not quite close to anything.

However, I was soon pleasantly surprised to learn that North Carolina had one of the fastest growing Latino immigrant populations in the U.S. And as I have a real interest in immigrant rights, I was pleased to find a job at the bilingual Latino Community Credit Union (LCCU); I am one of the three gringos out of about 50 employees.

Let me tell you a bit about LCCU. It wasn’t created because the Latino population was a lucrative niche market; it started because Latinos were getting robbed and killed for their cash. Latinos have a reputation for carrying cash. Most do not use mainstream banks because of barriers such as lack of confidence, language difficulties, and lack of services for immigrants without social security numbers. At LCCU we offer more than just banking, we offer free financial education workshops and curriculum. With 1% delinquency on our home loans, we have weathered the current credit crisis fairly well.

My work combines so many of my interests: microfinance, education, speaking another language, interacting with people from all over the world, and most of all providing opportunities that were previously out of reach. My thesis on microfinance and the shift from a culture of credit to a culture of savings has come alive for me with my work. AGS courses on economics, theory, culture, and communications have helped prepare me to be more analytical and aware of the bigger picture…even in a small city in the South.

Soviet Posters


The posters I speak about in this book date from 1917 to the end of the Cold War, and feature the work of such major Russian groundbreaking avant-garde designers as El Lissitzky and Alexander Rodchenko, as well as extraordinary works by lesser-known artists.

This is one of the first books on the Soviet Propaganda Posters to be published outside of Russia. It explains how the Soviet leaders initially used posters as visual propaganda, a form they found necessary to spread revolution in a largely illiterate nation.

Political posters took the place of religious icons as way of unifying the nation and to establish the image of the revolution by providing the political education that the leaders wanted; many aimed at the elimination of illiteracy and promoted public health. A short period of relative freedom in the late 1920s allowed the development of constructivist posters created by avant-garde artists like Malevich but these were later followed by decades of Stalin-era posters during which time artists were required to make their work conform to the wishes of the party, to ignore present realities and instead imagine a glorious socialist future.

Posters were usually produced in various quantities between 5,000 and 100,000. As they often had a very short life span and latterly were destroyed, so many of them are now rare items that have recently become items of collections, sold at the auction houses for sums often largely exceeding the initial estimated price.

Alumni News

Culver Van Der Jagt, Ph.D. (Class of 2000) passed the U.S. Multistate Bar exam in May 2008, scoring in the top 2% of test takers across the country. He is now employed as an attorney with the law firm of Gutterman Griffiths in Denver, Colorado and making a name for himself as a tough negotiator and capable litigator.

Culver will be travelling to Cape Town and Bangkok in the next few months.

He says, “Diplomacy has its place in litigation for sure, but diplomacy is easier when the other side knows that you have the "puissance" and the "pouvoir" in the negotiation.”

He thanks AGS for equipping him to defend a position under tremendous pressure.

Matthew Reichel M.A. (Class of 2006) is running as a Democrat, for the U.S. House seat from the 5th district of Illinois, in the coming special election.

For more information about Matthew and his campaign visit his website: www.mattreichel.us
Charlotte Bennborn M.A. (Class of 2007) has been appointed delegate for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

After completing training in Geneva, she took up her first posting in one of the world’s trouble spots — Darfur, Sudan where she will serve for twelve months before being sent to another post.

Jenn Grant, M.A. (Class of 2008) is consulting at the UN World Food Program in Rome. She is a Production Facilitator working in the Communications and Public Policy Strategy Division. She assists, among other things, in coordinating and developing multi-media tools that will internally communicate new policy initiatives to senior staff.

Prasanna VERNENKAR M.A. (Class of 2005) says, “I currently do business development for Creative Associates International, Inc., a for-profit NGO based in Washington, DC, that works with various US agencies (including USAID and Department of State), World Bank, UN, and other international agencies to provide Educational Programming and Grants-based Programming to transition countries.

Sien (my wife) and I currently live in the DC area and are expecting an addition to the family in early May.”

Christy Davis (Malavai) M.A. (Class of 2005) started a new job in October this year, as an executive bilingual assistant for the international valuation team at DTZ Eurex in Neuilly, just outside Paris. DTZ is a British real estate company with offices around the world.

Christy Davis (Malavai) M.A. (Class of 2005)

Three weeks ago my husband and I bought a nice apartment in Agenteuil. Looks like I’m now settled in France with a husband, job and mortgage.”

Abigail Pratt (Class of 2006) is now in Udaipur, Southern Rajasthan, India, working as a program director for the Foundation for Sustainable Development, a San Francisco based NGO.

She says, “We work in conjunction with local grassroots NGOs: providing micro-grants, offering proposal writing and project support, and working with international students who are trying to get developmental field experience.”

Omar Bandar M.A. (Class of 2004) is currently working for the municipal government of Cambridge Massachusetts, for City Councilor Marjorie C. Decker.

He provides policy and political strategy recommendations, assists with constituent services, and represents the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Councilor Decker’s behalf, on the Executive Board of the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities.

The International Association of Peace Messenger Cities was established to recognize and encourage the role and responsibility cities have in creating a culture of peace within their borders. Omar attended the APMC’s Executive Board meeting in Suwon, South Korea, and traveled to Sochi, Russian Federation, mid-November for the organization’s General Assembly.

For more information about Omar and his recent and upcoming projects, visit www.OmarBandar.com

Questioning Democracy in the 21st Century: Relevant, Redundant or Risk?
4th Annual AGSIRD Graduate Student Conference
June 2 & 3, 2009

Will bring together students and academics, professionals and researchers to present studies on this important topic.

The conference committee has put out a call for papers that explore broad concepts of democracy.

For more information please visit www.agsirdconference.com

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