



“Having these quilts here allowed the people who made them to have their voices heard.”

– Luc Copeland '18
Nursing Major and
Nuala Pell Leadership Program Scholar

A Global Call for Mercy

Quilt exhibit celebrates triumph of the human spirit.

Refusing to be diminished by war and suffering, men, women and children from vulnerable communities around the world have found a light in the darkness through the therapeutic art of quilt making.

From March 8 to 16, 18 quilts from 14 countries were featured in the Ochre Court exhibit, “A Global Call for Mercy – Vulnerable Communities Speak out through Quilts.” Inspired by the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy – Pope Francis’ campaign for social justice – the exhibit was made possible by students in the Nuala Pell Leadership Program and the Advocacy Project, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C.

The goal of the exhibit is to shed light on injustices largely unnoticed by most of the world. Protesting war crimes, human rights abuses, poverty and pollution, the quilts have traveled to the United Nations and to museums and universities across the country.

More than 150 individuals contributed embroidered squares to the exhibit, which was grouped into the five critical concerns of the Sisters of Mercy – Earth, immigration, nonviolence, racism and women. The display also featured quilts made by children.

As part of the campaign, quilters were provided with the materials to embroider squares depicting their stories and experiences. Quilters included women from the DRC and Mali who survived war rape, Roma women who were expelled from France, children in Nepal who were rescued from child labor, family members of those who disappeared in Peru and Guatemala, children who live in garbage dumps in India and people who suffered disabilities during the wars in northern Uganda and Vietnam. One quilt from Uganda even described the ritual of child sacrifice.

According to Kay Scanlan '18, a Nuala Pell Leadership Program scholar and a psychology and English literature major, the idea to bring the quilts to campus came to the scholars during their trip to Washington, D.C., last October, which included a visit to the Advocacy Project.

“We ended up at a small church where they had set up some quilts, some of their more provocative ones, just to get a discussion going,” Scanlan says. “We were all deeply moved by the message – they were very graphic, but also very beautiful. We all really wanted them to come to Salve, because they fit in with the Jubilee Year of Mercy.”

Most of the squares were embroidered with help from American Peace Fellows (graduate students) volunteering abroad through the Advocacy Project’s fellowship program. Several fellows and quilters from Rhode Island were also featured at the exhibition, and 14 of the quilts were assembled by expert quilters in the U.S., including Barbara Barber from Westerly, R.I., and Allison Wilbur from Barrington, R.I.



(l-r): Nuala Pell Leadership Program scholars Alexis Jankowski '18, Alessio Ayuninjam '18, Kay Scanlan '18, Devin Smith '18, Omar Kane '18, Amanda Reis '18, Luc Copeland '18, Brittany Fox '18, Jacob Lang '18 and Kathryn Clancy '18 act as docents during the Advocacy Project's quilt exhibit opening March 10.

“I’m very proud to be part of why these quilts made it to campus,” says philosophy major and Nuala Pell scholar Jacob Lang '18. “I think it’s very important to open the eyes of young people to the true horrors of the world. Before seeing these quilts, I was truly ignorant of all the terrible things that can happen.”

“Salve’s mission says we want to work for a world that is harmonious, just and merciful,” notes psychology major Alexis Jankowski '18, another Nuala Pell scholar. “In many of these quilts, you’re seeing just the opposite; you’re seeing war and terror. We hope this exhibit helped to alleviate the troubles so many people are going through, or at least lightened their load.”

“It was an honor to bring these quilts here,” says Nuala Pell scholar and nursing major Luc Copeland '18. “Having these quilts here allowed the people who made them to have their voices heard. I’m glad Salve Regina was an advocate in spreading their message.”

“The best part of this exhibit for me was watching guests see the quilts for the first time,” Scanlan adds. “I was showing a woman one of the quilts that portrayed violence, but on the surface depicted only a gorgeous pattern with painted squares.

“She leaned in closer and I noticed a spark in her face, the same realization we all had when we recognized the tremendous struggle behind these stories.”

– Allison Abgrab '18 and Lily Margaret Jones '17

Visit www.youtube.com/salveregina to learn more about the Advocacy Project and the students behind the exhibit.