Oak Human Rights Fellowship

2015 Oak Fellow
The 2015 Oak Fellow is Jodi Koberinski of Canada, whose pioneering work reimagining agriculture and advocating for more equitable food systems puts her at the forefront in the field of food sovereignty, the theme for this year’s Oak Fellowship. Koberinski has been an entrepreneur, operating a small café and a small-scale food-processing project, as well as the executive director of the Organic Council of Ontario. Now she is launching the Beyond Pesticides Network, a movement to transform agriculture in Canada and beyond. Although she hails from a country that has earned a global reputation as a champion of human rights, Koberinski says she feels increasingly vulnerable in Canada. In recent years Voices-Voix, a network of Canadian civil society organizations, has documented what it calls “the shrinking democratic space for dialogue on public policy and for dissent” in Canada. In a 2013 report it claimed that environmental groups, in particular, are being “systematically silenced” by the government. Our Oak Fellow, who calls herself a “town crier,” comes to Colby College as the political environment grows increasingly fractious back home. Koberinski has become a global leader in the effort to create sustainable, safe, and secure food systems around the world. She works tirelessly on behalf of not only consumers of food, but also farm families and rural communities seeking food sovereignty.

Previous Oak Fellows
2014: Clare Byarugaba, co-coordinator of the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law, founded in 2009 to fight efforts in Uganda to criminalize both homosexuality itself and activism on behalf of the LGBTI community
2013: Maung Maung Than and Mya Nandar Aung, have worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to protect the rights of stateless people in western Burma and with various organizations to encourage Buddhist-Muslim reconciliation
2012: Zandile Nhlengetza, principal of South Africa’s Uluada School, a place of learning for young people as well as a community center that organizes adults to combat problems such as gender inequity, sexual abuse, and violence
2011: Fatima Barnad, founder and president of the Society for Rural Education and Development, which organizes and advocates for the Dalit (untouchable) community in India
2010: Jesinta Makofo, executive director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, an NGO that monitors human rights abuses throughout the country
2009: Hadat Ziv, executive director of Physicians for Human Rights—Israel, who has worked on numerous campaigns to secure access to health care for Israel’s most underrepresented groups, including Palestinians, African refugees, and migrants
2008: Afsan Chowdhury, a journalist whose career has focused on AIDS/STD awareness, children’s rights, refugee rights, and, more recently, climate change and environmental rights in Bangladesh

Oak Scholarships
In addition to the annual Oak Human Rights Fellowship, the College also has a Colby-Oak international scholarship program for students who have suffered or whose families have suffered political oppression, including politically motivated torture. Additional Oak scholarships are awarded to other international students, with two reserved for students from Zimbabwe and with a preference for one or two students from Denmark.

Application Information
For more information, contact
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Waterville, Maine 04901 U.S.A.
admissions@colby.edu
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fax: 207-859-4828

Oak Scholar Gift Ntuli ’14, from Mutare, Zimbabwe, won the 2013 Colby Entrepreneurial Alliance Business Competition, receiving $15,000 for his nonprofit initiative to distribute rechargeable lanterns in remote villages of Zimbabwe. Ntuli earned a full scholarship for a master’s program in geophysics at Baylor University in Texas.
The Oak Fellowship

The Oak Fellowship annually offers an opportunity for one prominent activist in international human rights to take a leave from frontline work and spend the fall semester (mid-August to mid-December) in residence at Colby. This provides the fellow time for respite, reflection, research, and writing. Following the period of the award, the fellow is expected to return home to continue her/his human rights work.

The Oak Fellow’s responsibilities include regular meetings with students through a small seminar class and informal discussion groups. Additionally, the fellow works with Colby’s faculty to shape a lecture series or symposium on his/her human rights interests. The fellow participates in the intellectual life of the campus, providing Colby students the opportunity to work with an internationally recognized human rights activist.

In addition to a $33,000 stipend, the fellowship includes health benefits, housing, a campus meal plan, and transportation. The fellowship also provides an office, access to the College’s computer and library resources, a student assistant to help with the seminar and research, and secretarial support. To ensure that the fellow fully benefits from the extended respite and safety of the fellowship experience, the program is designed to allow dependent family members to join the fellow in residence at Colby. A limited budget is allocated to help offset the cost of transportation, housing, and meals for family members who accompany the fellow.

Eligibility for the Oak Fellowship is restricted to those whose work takes place primarily outside the United States. Selection criteria include achievements in the struggle for human rights, the need for respite and removal from danger, and the ability to contribute to the Colby community.

The Arts and Human Rights

The Oak Institute for Human Rights at Colby College is pleased to issue this call for nominations for the 2016 Oak Fellowship. Our 2016 theme is the arts and human rights, and we seek an artist who also functions as a human rights activist. Specifically, we welcome applications from those who have been subjected to, or are at risk of experiencing, human rights violations as a result of their artistic expression or those who have used their art to foster greater awareness of particular human rights violations. Applications are encouraged from practitioners who, through their artwork, provoke and engage an open dialogue within and beyond their local communities. We ask for your help in identifying artist-activists in need of respite.

About Colby

Colby College, founded in 1813, is one of America’s outstanding and most prestigious liberal arts colleges, offering a rigorous academic program that fosters transformational relationships between students and faculty. Located on one of the most beautiful campuses in the nation, Colby overlooks a small New England town in Maine’s Kennebec River valley. The College enrolls approximately 1,850 undergraduate students and has a faculty of 200.