

12-2018

Jesuit Worldwide Learning Graduations in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Dzaleka Refugee Camp July 2018

Marie Friedemann

Regis University, mfriedem@regis.edu

Fr. John P. Fitzgibbons

Regis University, president@regis.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe>

Recommended Citation

Friedemann, Marie and Fitzgibbons, Fr. John P. (2018) "Jesuit Worldwide Learning Graduations in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Dzaleka Refugee Camp July 2018," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*: Vol. 7: No. 2, Article 11.

Available at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol7/iss2/11>

This Reflection is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarly and Peer-Reviewed Journals at ePublications at Regis University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* by an authorized administrator of ePublications at Regis University. For more information, please contact epublications@regis.edu.

Jesuit Worldwide Learning Graduations in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Dzaleka Refugee Camp July 2018

In July 2018, Father John Fitzgibbons, S.J. and Father Daniel Hendrickson, S.J., Presidents of Regis and Creighton Universities, respectively, hosted the Graduation Ceremonies at Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya and Dzaleka Refugee Camp, Malawi. Fifty students received Diplomas in Liberal Studies during the ceremonies. A brief description of Jesuit Worldwide Learning precedes Father Fitzgibbons' speech to the graduates below.

History of Jesuit Worldwide Learning

In 2010 at a Jesuit schools conference, Fr. Aldofo Nicolas, S.J., then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, challenged Jesuit institutions to go beyond mere networking and explore deeper ways to collaborate, including sharing knowledge, faculty, and libraries. It was at this conference that an agreement was signed between Regis University, Jesuit Commons and Jesuit Refugee Service to deliver higher education to forcibly displaced persons. From this emerged *Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins*, presently known as *Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL)*. From its inception, JWL was conceived as a Jesuit educational vehicle to capitalize on its vocation to universality.

Regis University holds a central role in Jesuit Worldwide Learning by transcribing all academic courses and grades, selecting and vetting faculty and awarding the credential: the Diploma in Liberal Studies.

The Mission of JWL is to provide equitable high quality tertiary learning to people and communities at the margins of societies—be it through poverty, location, lack of opportunity, conflict or forced displacement—so all can contribute their knowledge and voices to the global community of learners and together foster hope to create a more peaceful and humane world.

The Vision of JWL: Learning Together to Transform the World. JWL believes that tertiary learning and the formation of a global community of learners addresses the root causes of poverty, isolation, despair, conflict and displacement in order to build a more peaceful and humane world. JWL knows education fosters hope.



Scope of JWL: Since 2010, over 5,000 forcibly displaced and marginalized people have studied in JWL's programs, 50% of whom are women. During an initial three-year pilot period, JWL pioneered the offering of an online Diploma in Liberal Studies to refugees and host community members in Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi, Kakuma refugee camp in northwest Kenya, and in the city of Amman, Jordan. Now, the coursework for the Diploma is offered in 13 Community Learning Centers in the following locations: Northern Iraq (Domiz, Erbil, Khanke, Dohuk, Alquosh); Afghanistan (Herat, Bamyan); Sri Lanka (Vavuniya, Mannar); Kenya (Kakuma); Malawi, (Dzaleka); Myanmar (Taunggyi) and Zambia (Zambezi). The Diploma is offered in asynchronous, online, eight-week courses taught by discipline-expert faculty who are experienced in online teaching, Ignatian pedagogy, and adult learning and have hearts for the needs of the marginalized. Over 200 faculty are affiliated with the Diploma program; 100 of them represent Jesuit institutions worldwide.

Student Profile: The number of graduates varies each year, but on average, 50-60 students complete the three-year program each year. To date, 213 students have completed the Diploma.

Diploma students come from over twenty different countries. South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Kenya, and Syria are all countries represented by Diploma students. The age of students varies from 20 to 50 years old. Diploma students are 50% men and 50% women. Some students have already pursued higher education before joining the Diploma program; some students have had very little “tertiary” education (higher education) before their work with Regis.

Curriculum: The curriculum builds on the time-tested Jesuit values of social justice and service. As a part of their studies, students are encouraged to engage with their refugee community. Some

students have founded non-profit organizations or small businesses of their own. Some are teaching children or preparing their colleagues to successfully complete the admission process for the Diploma. Some resettled students are working with large humanitarian organizations and still others are pursuing advanced education (bachelor’s degrees) in a variety of higher education institutions. The focus of the Diploma is less on job readiness or job training, but rather on person-building and transformation of human lives that are focused on service to others. In their admission essays for the program, many applicants quote Nelson Mandela, “*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*”



Commencement Speech for Jesuit Worldwide Learning Diploma Graduates Kakuma Camp, Kenya, July 2018

Welcome to the UNHCR Kakuma Team, members of Jesuit Worldwide Learning, Jesuit Refugee Service, and family and friends of our graduates.

First and foremost, I offer my congratulations to you graduates and acknowledge your families and friends for their part in supporting you in the accomplishments we celebrate today. You have made many and profound sacrifices for this

education; family, friends, and professors have done the same for you.

So, in addition, I want to express my admiration and appreciation for the faculty and staff here and around the world who have helped you graduates come to this moment.

Finally, to the graduates, you have accomplished something marvelous; you have changed your lives for the better and, honestly, you have changed the world for the better. Please allow me

to explain. I beg you, do not let the brevity of these words distract you from the import and the magnitude of what you have accomplished.

You have engaged in a pioneering and prophetic kind of education; your education here has been an encounter with some of the best thinking about literature, history, religious thought, and meaning the world has to offer. You have engaged in intercultural and international society building. You have put rigorous thinking behind the human experience and human wisdom you have brought to the classroom. Finally, you have added to the wisdom of this very large and diverse community. I speak not only of the community called Kakuma Camp but of the Regis University students and faculty in Denver, Colorado, and educators and scholars around the world. Over 200 Jesuit university and college presidents met only days ago, in part, to consider how to grow and expand and deepen his kind of pioneering and prophetic education.

You are now part of a much bigger family, the family of those who are Jesuit educated.

Pioneers, like prophets, have always had a dual role. On the one hand, they articulate the real presence of the Divine, the Holy One, in our midst. Even as they teach us to wait for the totality of the fulfillment of that presence.

Pioneers and prophets open new horizons, expand knowledge, and share wisdom.

Yet, on the other hand, pioneers and prophets have the noble, if unenviable role of unmasking the false narratives, bogus dichotomies, and the idols of our time. They always challenge the false gods any culture conjures.

The gift of your university education is, then, what it has been since the beginning; to unmask fear and render it powerless; to deconstruct false gods that entrap people. You have joined the community of learned persons but as with all prophets and pioneers, the education you have acquired is not simply for you. It is for you but it is for this community as well. This community needs you; the world community needs you.

And so, it is my happy yet solemn duty to charge you graduates with the responsibility to promote depth of thought and imagination rather than settling for mediocrity; to share in the common responsibility for the welfare of the world by engaging challenges with critical intelligence; and finally, to minister to all by committing to being a life-long learner and never settling because there is always more to learn and share.

Congratulations, graduates! Welcome to the Alumni Association of Regis University! 