

AN Bryce

WINTER 2016

# SCHOLARS INITIATIVE

**THE YEAR IN REVIEW  
AND UPCOMING EVENTS**

**STAFF SPOTLIGHT**

Stephen Smith  
Director of Regional Development

**A GRACIOUS,  
DISTINGUISHED GUEST**

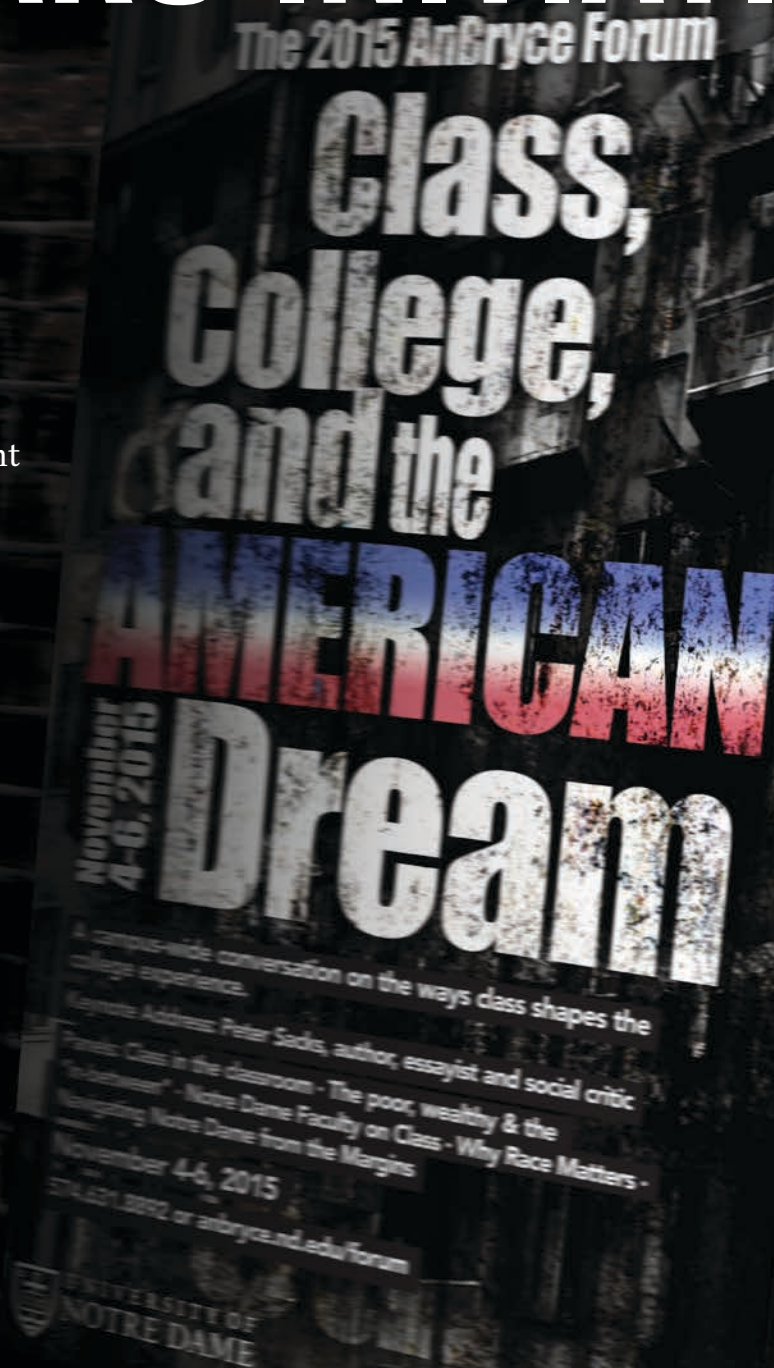
U.S. Supreme Court Justice  
Sonia Sotomayor

**SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT**

Jessica Pedroza '17  
Salonee Seecharan '18  
Felix Mayorga Alvarez '19  
Christina Jeong '17

**THE FORUM**

Class, College, and the American Dream: The 2015 AnBryce Forum



# THE YEAR IN REVIEW AND UPCOMING EVENTS

**We had quite an exciting fall term. The opening of our new student lounge in Brownson Hall created many opportunities for study breaks and social gatherings. We are amazed at the transformation of our space and are happy we can now offer a “home base” for our students.**

We kicked off the year with the AnBryce Orientation, followed by a very special guest speaker, United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. At our annual tailgate, we saw performances from our scholars in the Notre Dame Bagpipe band and Harmonia, an all-women’s a Capella group.

Later in the term, many of our students assisted us with the inaugural AnBryce Forum, “Class, College, and the American Dream,” and participated in two professional speaker events with Mr. David Robinson, Founder of IDEA Public Schools - Carver Academy and NBA Hall of Fame Basketball Player and Mr. John Weiland, President and COO of CR Bard Inc. and Horatio Alger Award Recipient.

We have many exciting events in the upcoming term, namely the Global Immersion Programs to Washington DC and London, followed by the class of 2020 selection. We are also looking forward to hosting our spring term professional speaker.

We look forward to keeping you up-to-date on the AnBryce Program and invite you stay current with our growing program at [anbryce.nd.edu](http://anbryce.nd.edu).

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



### STEPHEN SMITH, DIRECTOR OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A world-changing program, a decade in the making



In 2005, Stephen Smith '01, Director of Regional Development, met with Mr. Anthony Welters and Ambassador Beatrice Welters, whose son, Bryant, had just enrolled at Notre Dame. Over the course of their conversation, Stephen learned about the AnBryce Scholars Initiative, an intriguing program the Welters had established at the New York University School of Law, where Anthony served as the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

“As soon as I found out what a huge difference the AnBryce Scholars Initiative had made at NYU, I thought that it could make a similar impact at Notre Dame,” Stephen says. Stephen visited NYU and spent three days meeting with the AnBryce staff and the Dean of the Law School. “I wanted to find out what they were doing at NYU and how we could replicate it on a broader scale at Notre Dame.” Over the next nine years, Stephen worked with the Welters and administrators at the University of Notre Dame on a series of proposals to shape the program into what it has become today. In 2013, Notre Dame welcomed the first cohort of nine AnBryce Scholars. Today, 25 Scholars are

living and learning on Notre Dame’s campus—and shaping the campus community for the better.

“Notre Dame is a place where community is so important,” Stephen says. “Through AnBryce we can place these students in the dorms to the benefit of the entire campus. These kids are brilliant, but they’re brilliant with a heightened level of maturity and they all have a spark for leadership. I can only imagine that they’re having an amazing impact on their communities.”

# A GRACIOUS, DISTINGUISHED GUEST: U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR



On September 2, 2015, students and guests of the AnBryce program were treated to an audience with U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor. Justice Sotomayor was on campus in connection with a public event with NBC News correspondent Anne Thompson and U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Ann Claire Williams.

In addition to this event, which was ticketed but open to the public, Justice Sotomayor was tapped to speak at several smaller, private events around campus. The AnBryce program was lucky enough to host one such meeting. Working with staff from the President's Office, we planned a reception in two parts, the first of which would see her meet AnBryce students, the second of which would see her meet several guests of our choosing. Faculty, advisors, admissions and enrollment officers and staff, and other AnBryce supporters, including AnBryce founders and friends of the Justice, Anthony and Beatrice Welters, were in attendance for the second leg of the reception. As I believe everyone who met her that afternoon would convey, Justice Sotomayor was a relatable, gracious, and impressive guest who offered food for thought for everyone.

I will limit my remarks about this exciting event, in the interests of space, but there are certainly many aspects to Justice Sotomayor's visit worth commenting upon, from the way that she commanded each leg of the reception (relating to each guest with individual attention) to the honesty with which she answered questions about her life and career. Also, worth noting was her very clear desire to be an instrument of wisdom by passing along hard-earned lessons. Every answer had an authenticity and in-the-moment kind of thoughtfulness and consideration. For example, in addressing a question from an advisor about how she navigated her career before becoming a U.S. Supreme Court Justice, she replied that she defied the odds by taking the jobs she really wanted (as opposed to the jobs she was expected to take as a woman of color). Her conversation with the students in the AnBryce program was equally impressive. In answering a question about how her present position has shaped her vision of the law, she replied (after a brief pause to consider the question) that her position as a Supreme Court Justice has made her acutely aware of the impact of the decisions the Supreme Court makes in the lives of everyday people. She also offered some insight into her own personal story – shared in part in her autobiography *My Beloved World* – and of the benefits of being a first-generation student with a strong desire to succeed.

Justice Sotomayor's visit and the gift of her example will be thought of by those in attendance for months and years to come.

# INTRODUCING THE ANBRYCE SCHOLARS



*Top Row: Jenna Kwak, Logan McAbee Thomas, Felix Mayorga Alvarez, Erin Williams  
Bottom Row: Kesi Rivera, Luis Ribera, Jane Yeom, Jinelfry Rodriguez, Karla Burgos-Morón, Zoë Usowski*

We are excited to introduce our third cohort, the Class of 2019 AnBryce Scholars. This group of students is our largest group yet with ten students from across the United States, yet they seem as if they have known each other for years. This term the group will embark on a newly designed first year writing course for AnBryce students in preparation for the Global Immersion Programs to London and Washington DC.

We could not be more pleased with this addition to the AnBryce family and look forward to watching them grow over their time at Notre Dame.



## Poverty, incarceration, and the power of presence

This past summer, Jessica Pedroza '17, a political science major, spent eight weeks in Cochabamba, Bolivia, as part of the Center for Social Concern's International Summer Service Learning Program. While she was there she participated in two different ministry sites—an afterschool tutoring program and Manos Con Libertad, an organization that supports incarcerated and ex-incarcerated women with empowerment classes, new skills, and employment.

"Sitting in several group reflection meetings with inmates and other U.S. volunteers, I was exposed to issues concerning poor women, the criminal system, children and orphans, the indigenous population and politics," Jessica says. "I also learned about the importance of ministry of presence—how impactful just being present and building relationships is in short-term missions."

Jessica's experience in Bolivia set the course for how she'll spend the Spring 2016 semester: studying—and being present with—inmates in Chile. "I hope to get started on my research, which will likely look into the connection between poverty and incarceration," Jessica says. "Ideally and God willing, I'll be volunteering in a prison in Chile during the spring, going back to Bolivia in the summer, and then taking a class at a correctional facility in South Bend to soak up as much as I can regarding the criminal justice system (and the stories of those who wind up in it) in my time left."



*Jessica Pedroza '17*



## 750 miles from home, Salonee still looks after her little brother

During her sophomore year at the Young Women's Leadership School in Queens, New York, Salonee Seecharan '18, caught a bus immediately after school every day and rode 45 minutes to her brother Nahush's middle school to pick him up and ensure he got home safely. "After-school activities were not an option," Salonee says.

Four years later, although Salonee is busy double majoring in political science and sociology (not to mention serving as a TA in the math department), she still finds time to look out for Nahush from afar. "I've told him about the tests he needs to take and the things he needs to do to prepare to go to college," Salonee says. "I'm here at Notre Dame and I want him to be at this point someday as well."

Now that extracurricular activities are an option, Salonee is taking advantage of everything Notre Dame has to offer. As part of the Summer Service Learning Program, Salonee worked in St. Margaret's House, a woman's shelter in South Bend. Next spring, she plans to intern in the Notre Dame Washington Program. "To be in the heart of the country after the election as a poly sci major—I'm kind of geeking out about it," Salonee says. "There are so many people fighting so hard to get into the White House. Hopefully I'll be there as well to see where it all goes down."



*Salonee Seecharan '18*

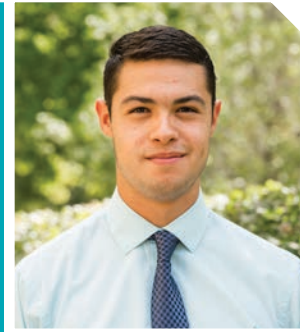


## Felix can count Justice Sonia Sotomayor among his first-year mentors

Just last year, Felix Mayorga Alvarez '19, was a senior in high school working two jobs, juggling school and extracurricular activities, and preparing to become the first person in his family to attend college. "I would go to school in the morning, leave class early, go to work, come home, eat dinner, go to my second job from six until 10 and then do homework when I got back home," Felix remembers. "It was hard to get enough sleep."

When Felix found out that he'd been accepted to Notre Dame, he was excited, but immediately concerned about how he would be able to afford it. "It was a pretty life-changing moment when the financial aid package came in," Felix says. In just his first semester as an AnBryce Scholar, Felix experienced another life-changing event: meeting U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. "Getting to talk with her privately and connect with her was really amazing," Felix recalls. "Socioeconomically, we'd been in some similar, difficult stages. Just to know that someone has worked their way through hardships and that I now have the same opportunity is incredible."

Felix feels that overcoming adversity in his youth will help prepare him—and his fellow AnBryce Scholars—to become the leaders of tomorrow. "We're better equipped to persevere through obstacles; we have the flexibility to be able to deal with whatever comes our way. AnBryce is all about that."



*Felix Mayorga Alvarez '19*



## Christina returned home to Korea—and found herself

In the summer of 2015, Christina Jeong '17, a Japanese and Film double major, traveled abroad to Seoul, Korea, to study at Yonsei University's International Summer School program. For Christina, the trip was an opportunity to return to the country of her birth and reconnect with her family, whom she hadn't seen since she was a child.

"I think my academic growth came second to my growth as an individual and what I learned about my own identity," Christina says. "I found more pieces to who I am as a person. By the time I returned from Korea, I felt as though I came back a more complete person."

According to Christina, she's found a second family in the AnBryce Scholars community. "Every dinner that we have—whether it's a fancy catered networking event or a South Dining Hall dinner—has helped me in one way or another. These little experiences I have with AnBryce always remind me that I'm not alone, and that I have family here at Notre Dame that values me."

Christina feels a deep sense of gratitude for the experiences she's had through AnBryce—and she plans to pay it forward. "We all will hopefully return to Notre Dame one day and give back to the community that invested so much in us," Christina says. "A large part of what drives and motivates me is knowing that somebody out there who doesn't even know me believed in me enough that they were willing to pay for my education and invest in my future. Isn't that something?"



*Christina Jeong '17*

**The 2015 AnBryce Forum**

**Class,  
College,  
and the  
AMERICAN  
Dream**

**November  
4-6, 2015**

**A campus-wide conversation on the ways class shapes the college experience.**

**Keynote Address: Peter Sacks, author, essayist and social critic**

**Panels: Class in the classroom · The poor, wealthy & the "in-between" · Notre Dame Faculty on Class · Why Race Matters · Navigating Notre Dame from the Margins**

**November 4-6, 2015**

**574.631.8892 or [anbryce.nd.edu/forum](http://anbryce.nd.edu/forum)**



# “Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

**I am not normally one for inspirational sayings.** I think they have their place, of course, and I am certainly not immune to their effects, whether touted by Oprah, my favorite self-help books or by speakers of aphorisms that have found their way into our everyday lives (like “if you’re handed lemons, make lemonade” or “one in the hand is better than two in the bush,” or my favorite – and I’m being cynical here – “sing like no one’s listening, dance like no one’s watching, love like you’ve never been hurt.” Ah, please...). But every once in a while, I find that an inspirational phrase really does its job, as it either resonates with some hard-earned kernel of wisdom I’ve attained or pushes me to think in ways that inform my next steps. The above quotation – sometimes attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson, sometimes not – is one such saying, and squarely relates to the subject of this essay, the 2015 AnBryce Forum. Like the AnBryce program itself, the 2015 AnBryce Forum was a new venture at Notre Dame. Through hard work and the participation of wonderful supporters, faculty and students, AnBryce was able to chart a new path with greater potential for the future. This campus-wide event took place at McKenna Hall Conference Center at Notre Dame from November 4-5, 2015.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>

## The Forum

The Forum began with a simple goal: to promote conversation about “class,” one of the most important issues on the American campus. Class is seldom talked about publicly on college campuses, perhaps most especially at Notre Dame, but it nevertheless impacts the experience of many of us. Why not bring the matter into the light of day? After all, the AnBryce Scholars Initiative at Notre Dame was started to support promising students who had experienced significant socioeconomic challenges. What more pressing a topic could there be for us to offer up for consideration by the very place in which our program existed? If we didn’t raise the issue, who would? Even more to the point, since college is considered a means of class and social mobility, a portal to greater opportunity in the American landscape, examining just how it provides that mobility – or not – was worthy of attention. Finally, we believed the Forum would be an affirming experience for our Scholars, offering them a larger perspective in which to understand their own experiences (they were encouraged to attend as many of the sessions as they could, and to serve as greeters and helpers).

Though armed with the knowledge that we were doing “something good” for the University, creating the Forum out of whole cloth was not an easy feat, though some things came together with surprising ease. Our poster, shown here, was the vision of a designer retained by Notre Dame’s Enrollment Division. Excited by the topic of the Forum, she quickly came up with a design that not only reflected our stated goals, but exceeded our expectations. After viewing the poster for the first time, Amanda and I were bowled over by how good it was. It certainly inspired us to greater heights as we planned the Forum. Our keynote speaker also “came easy,” in a sense. Journalist Peter Sacks, who wrote the award-winning book *Tearing Down the Gates: Confronting the Class Divide in American Education* (2007), immediately saw the value in what we were trying to do and signed on. An economist by training and a social critic, Sacks has spoken in a number of venues about the very topic we wished to explore. At the Forum,



he offered an engaging analysis of the ways that college has become a place of increasing, troubling stratification over time.

Our Forum panels were the product of decidedly more effort, with some not working out in the end. A panel on how college financial aid professionals define “poor,” “middle class,” and “wealthy,” didn’t happen because nearly every lead I approached was attending the same national meeting! The “Why Race Matters” panel (discussed below) would have looked different, had I had my original druthers.

The author of a well-received manuscript on the intersection of race and class at an elite college was very interested in participating, but couldn’t get to South Bend from the East Coast because of teaching commitments. That panel, which became more student-focused, was a rich offering, leading me to conclude it worked out the way it was meant to.

In the end, we offered three wonderful panels that explored the class question from perspectives both academic and personal. And our numbers, though not overwhelming, were good and steady, particularly given the preponderance of events on campus during the same period. The first panel, “Class in the Classroom,” defined class from a largely sociological perspective (though one presenter is an economist and poverty studies professor) and also examined the experience of largely poor students while navigating classes, social life and other aspects of the college experience. The second panel, “Considering Class,” saw four Notre Dame professors who were either working class or poor as young people, reflect on their own journeys through college and into the professoriate. With candor and unflinching honesty, tenured professors from American Studies, History, and Engineering reflected on how they navigated college – mostly elite institutions, including Notre Dame – and on how the experience shaped their perspectives on their careers, colleagues, and a host of other topics. Our third and final panel, “Why Race Matters,” chaired by VP, Associate Provost and

Professor Hugh Page was a joint student-staff panel. Two AnBryce students (Jessica Pedroza and Natalie Thomas), and a third (Bridget Galassini), who was introduced to me by retired Boston Globe editor and journalist, Matthew Storin, participated on this panel. Mr. Storin presented findings from his 2013 report on class and race at Notre Dame and the three students offered commentary on the report, touching upon their own experiences at ND in the process. Great Q&A, kicked off by nearly a dozen points for reflection offered by Dr. Page, followed this panel.

One final aspect of the Forum that deserves special mention were the billboards, posted on the first floor of McKenna. Three AnBryce students – Elicia Dennis, Cassidy Lawrence, and Maria Muñoz-Robles – offered the gift of their experience in print, commenting on the ways that their individual identities had shaped their Notre Dame experience in complicated ways. The print medium was unexpectedly affective, allowing guests to read and reflect at their leisure throughout the day. Originally, we imagined that a dozen AnBryce students would introduce audiences to their life stories in a performance-based format in a theatrical space on campus. Well, that didn’t happen, and for a number of reasons, mostly having to do with the ambitiousness of such a venture. An option for next time, or not, as time and inclination will allow.



We are indeed planning a “next time.” It is our intention to do the Forum on a biannual basis, meaning that the next Forum will take place in the Fall of 2017. We now have a path charted and a trail blazed, though the specific topic of that event has not been decided. That will come with time, and with the input of our students and faculty associates. In the mean, I’m left to reflect on the 2015 Forum, whose biggest takeaway, perhaps, is that shooting for the moon, really does leave you among the stars and that your attitude can be said to define your altitude. I guess the Forum taught me to believe in aphorisms after all.

**Dr. Paulette G. Curtis**  
Faculty Director of the AnBryce Scholars Initiative at the University of Notre Dame

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### CLASS, COLLEGE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM: THE 2015 ANBRYCE FORUM

# QUICK FAQS

How old is the Notre Dame AnBryce program?

Our program is only preceded by the AnBryce program at NYU Law, which began in 1999. The Notre Dame AnBryce program admitted its first cohort in 2013.



Read more at [anbryce.nd.edu](http://anbryce.nd.edu)

