WATER Interns - Simply the Best

By Mary E. Hunt

One answer to the question “What does WATER do?” is prepare people to do feminist work in religion and every other career! We have welcomed more than 80 interns over thirty-five years, mostly women but also a man, a now trans man, and a now non-binary person. They come from a range of religious traditions including Mormon, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Mennonite, Methodist, Baptist, Pagan, nones, and others. They range in age from high school to mid-60’s.

WATER interns have in common their curiosity about feminist work in religion, their willingness to roll up their sleeves, and their commitment to social justice. They all enjoy convening at the table for food and conversation, the heart of WATER. The first and the most recent (not the last!) intern illustrate this amazing cohort of WATER’s finest. Mónica Maher came to WATER in 1984, shortly after we opened our doors. A college student finding her next steps, she helped us get up and running. After degrees from Harvard Divinity School and Union Theological Seminary, the Rev. Dr. Maher was ordained in the United Church of Christ. She is currently a visiting professor at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in Quito, Ecuador and is becoming a Zen dharma teacher. I participated recently in a seminar she organized in Quito on “Religious Fundamentalism, Rights and Democracy” at the Latin American Social Sciences Institute (FLASCO). It had shades of WATER: rich conversation, a simply gorgeous central table of roses and petals, and Grail women in the group. I felt right at home.

Fast-forward to 2018. Charlotte Lim, a student of Political Science at the National University of Singapore, is capping her year of study abroad at Yale University with a summer at WATER. She brings curiosity about the political facets of faith-based feminism, excellent research/writing skills, and a deep commitment to put into practice what she is learning. Like Mónica, Charlotte aspires to share her experiences with others across the world, back home in Singapore, for which her WATER Alliance contacts will serve her well and she us.

As WATER celebrates thirty-five years of challenging feminist work in religion, these women, and all the people who have come between them, take our efforts global across generations, and into what we hope will be a more peaceful future.

Mary E. Hunt is Co-founder and Co-director of Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER).

Who Came Out of the WATER?

Learn from past WATER interns in our new podcast series, Who Came Out of the WATER, inspired by a gift from Jean and Dan Martens to WATER of original artwork (painted rock) by Sr. Corita Kent IHM. Episodes include:

- “Who Came Out of the WATER: Feminist Mennonites” featuring Cynthia Lapp ’95 and Kate Stoltzfus ’15
- “Who Came Out of the WATER: Loretto Volunteers” featuring Emily Cohen ’11 and Wendy Mallette ’13
- “Who Came Out of the WATER: Wesley Seminarians” featuring Clarafanccie Corner ’12 and Heureuse Kaj ’18

These episodes and more can be found on the iTunes Podcast app, Stitcher, Spreaker, and Soundcloud. Simply search WATERcast and listen for free!

By Annabeth Roeschley '07-'09

A Place like WATER

If there is a place where hard work is sustained by hard laughter, hard play, I have found it at WATER. If there is a space created and cultivated for women to make waves in religion, I have dug it deeply at WATER. If there is an energy sparking from the fingertips of an 83-year old Sister, I have touched it at WATER. If there is a sacred patch of grass where intergenerational 83-year old Sister, I have touched it at WATER. If there is a sacred patch of grass where intergenerational faith, profession and perspective, If there is a web that spans language and country, age and laughter, hard play, I have found it at WATER. If there is an energy sparking from the fingertips of an 83-year old Sister, I have touched it at WATER. If there is a sacred patch of grass where intergenerational

Who We Are

WATER is a global network, an educational and spiritual space, a center for dialogue on feminism, faith, and justice. We connect activists, religious leaders, students, scholars, and allies who are using feminist religious values to create social change. Founded in 1983 by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, we have been empowering people to address structural violence for thirty-five years, mostly women but also a man, a now trans man, and a non-binary person. They come from a range of religious traditions including Mormon, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Mennonite, Methodist, Baptist, Pagan, nones, and others. They range in age from high school to mid-60’s.

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Melissa Feito 2016 from Tufts University
Currently Loretto Volunteer, Producer at Interfaith Voices

"When I first came to WATER I feared it would be just another internship. What I learned instead about myself, my faith, and the church, was that I am happiest when working with and through the Spirit for the justice this world sorely needs. WATER was a form of spiritual energy for me. But that was possible because of the sisterhood and the desire for justice."

Lucy Tatman 1991 from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Currently Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Gender Studies at the University of Tasmania, Australia

"When I think of volunteering at WATER, my first memory is of laughter. Big belly-shaking laughter suffused with warmth, care, and a passion for life."

Ikkhas Saleem 2010 from Wellesley College
Currently a Co-host and Executive Producer of Identity Politics Podcast

"The most important thing I learned was how to make theology real, how to marry academic pursuit with the actual, lived experiences of communities in pursuit of social justice. I was, and am still, so inspired by the work of WATER. Working closely with Mary and Diann, I learned this isn’t something they just do. As a black muslim woman entering WATER I didn’t exactly know what to expect but I knew what I received: mentorship, guidance, healing, understanding, free meals lol, community, a space to breathe and expand. Undoubtedly, WATER has played a significant role in shaping who I am and my work today. I am always in gratitude."

Cathy Jaskay 2013-2015 Loretto Volunteer Program
Currently Student at Vanderbilt Divinity School

"You’ve changed my life and continuously shown me what true hospitality, generosity, humor, creativity and friendship can be."

More than 80 Interns have graced WATER. We applaud each one and the Donors who have made these Internships possible!

Clarafancie Cromer 2012 from Wesley Theological Seminary
Currently Ministry Leader for the Veterans Assistance Ministry at Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington DC

"While interning at WATER, as part of my Masters of Divinity degree, I did an Intercultural Immersion with the Gullah People in the Low Country region of South Carolina and Georgia. I was able to be West African spiritual experience to the spiritual practices of the Gullah People who are known for preserving their African linguistic and cultural heritage. I brought my experience back here to WATER and discovered that the WATER library has books on the Gullah Geechee people. For my graduation I was able to read the sermonic texts in the Gullah language at the Washington National Cathedral. Without my experience I would not have been able to do that."

Gade Duersken 1998 Mennonite Washington Study-Service Year
Currently Perpetrator Intervention Coordinator and Internship for Strong Families

"While at WATER it was as if my world came into focus and I finally was able to begin to piece together the painful and liberating process of letting go of self-defeating faith traditions and what I considered unimportant until then, theological truths. Not only did it open up my eyes to urban life… but to the basis of feminism and queer theology."

Kitty Stafford CSJ 1992 Sabbatical after missionary work in Peru
Currently a Volunteer with CEASE, Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

"From my first day at the office I was enveloped in warmth and love which included the practicalities of finding me a better place to live, allowing me to use WATER resources for a fundraising appeal for our Women’s Centre in Peru. Those twelve weeks were probably the most energizing I have ever spent in my life."