

AN EDUCATOR'S POINT OF VIEW

Highlighting the voices of educators and alumni of the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Teaching the Holocaust and Prejudice Reduction at Kean University

Brittany Hamilton



- Graduate of the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate on Teaching the Holocaust and Prejudice Reduction Program (2018)
- Student in the Master's of Holocaust and Genocide Studies Program at Kean University (Anticipated 2025)
- 7th grade social studies teacher at Hillsborough Middle School
- Content areas: Ancient Civilizations and American Civics
- Area of interest: modern human rights, current world conflicts, and how human rights plays an integral role in war crimes and crimes against humanity

What has been your main takeaway from the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate?

The networking, because I have met and been able to sit in on so many different talks by so many different experts in the field. When I go to do research, I don't necessarily have to start in databases and things like that, because I have people that I can reach out to. I have trusted resources where I know that if they wrote an article or they wrote a book, it's going to be as unbiased as possible.

How are you best able to implement what you have learned in the classroom?

I focus on human rights as much as possible, even though it's not part of my curriculum. So, it's definitely not something that I'm required to teach, but it's something that I pull in wherever I can. So, when we talk about ancient civilizations, I make sure to mention when there's massacres or war crimes, even though it wasn't classified as such at that time. In civics we do a lot of how our role as citizens of the world impacts the countries around us in addition to the United States.

How are you hoping to create an impact in the lives of your students? How have you already created an impact?

One of the ways that I've seen them already respond is when I took them to Europe over the summer to London, Paris and Rome. I went with a small group, and they were asking really intelligent and forward-thinking questions about things like universal health care and the homeless populations that we came across. They were drawing comparisons between how few homeless they saw in these three areas and then how many they see when they're in New York here at home. My goal, in general, is to make sure that they realize that they're citizens of the world, not just the United States and that they can have an impact; it's not a small thing to have an impact on the world.

What inspired you to continue your education after completing the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate?

My reason to continue was that I found that the Post-Bacc courses were high quality. I learned a lot and that made me assume, and I now can say rightfully so, that the rest of the program was going to do the same.

It is important to note that this program and certificate are not just for history teachers. I went through the Post-Bacc program with math teachers and an art teacher. Everyone got a really good base of things that they could do in their settings, even if they weren't history teachers.

What is a memorable moment that solidified the importance of both this certificate and program for you?

A memorable moment for me was the Kean University 16th Annual Human Rights Conference on December 8, which commemorated the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nelson Mandela's grandson, Ndaba Mandela, was the featured speaker. He was talking about the importance of having a mentor who can challenge you, but also praise you when it's necessary, and just that role of having someone to be able to turn to. Not only did I see that in Dr. Adara Goldberg, but also I want to be that for my students.

What is one piece of advice you would give to other educators in this program or who are considering attaining this certificate or an MA in Holocaust & Genocide Studies?

Pick an area of interest. Just because some of the classes focus on the Holocaust, that particular subject area doesn't have to be the thing that interests you in order to take the courses or draw comparisons. For example, I focus more on human rights and modern conflicts. So, each graduate student has their own niche and I think that it's important to know that.