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Parker Palmer to Speak at CIIS Commencement

Author, educator, and activist Parker J. Palmer, PhD, will speak at CIIS’s 39th Annual Commencement Ceremony on May 20. Palmer will accept an honorary doctorate in Integrative Teaching and Learning at the ceremony, which will be held at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco.

Palmer focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality, and social change. His work spans a wide range of institutions—colleges and universities, public schools, community organizations, religious institutions, corporations, and foundations. He serves as senior associate of the American Association of Higher Education, as senior advisor to the Fetzer Institute, and is the founder and senior advisor for the Center for Courage & Renewal.


Palmer has been awarded eight honorary doctorates and several national awards, including two Distinguished Achievement Awards from the National Educational Press Association, an Award of Excellence from the Associated Church Press, and major grants from the Danforth Foundation, the Lilly Endowment, and the Fetzer Institute. The Leadership Project, a 1998 U.S. survey of 10,000 administrators and faculty, named Palmer one of the 30 most influential senior leaders in higher education and one of 10 key “agenda-setters” of the past decade.

In February, Palmer was the opening keynote speaker at CIIS’s groundbreaking conference, Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education.

“I am delighted and honored that Parker Palmer will be the Institute’s commencement speaker,” said CIIS President Joseph Subbiondo. “He is a person who lives the core educational values and aspirations of CIIS.”

Letter from the President

Dear CIIS Alumni and Friends,

It is with great sadness that I begin my letter to you with the news that on December 27, 2006, CIIS’s beloved cofounder Bina Chaudhuri died. I learned of Bina’s death while traveling in Auroville and India, and was heartened to hear that Bina, who had suffered a stroke on Christmas Eve day from which she never awoke, was surrounded by her family and close friends at the end.

In addition to cofounding CIIS in 1968 with her husband, Haridas, Bina assumed responsibility for the survival and direction of the Institute upon Dr. Chaudhuri’s death in 1975. She continued to be a close advisor and friend to many CIIS faculty, staff, students, and alumni for more than 30 years. During my time at CIIS, Bina was an inspiration and a guide—I will miss her dearly.

My thoughts turned to Bina and Haridas Chaudhuri’s founding vision of CIIS as a model of integral higher education when, on February 22 through 25, CIIS and the Fetzer Foundation cosponsored a pioneering conference in San Francisco entitled “Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education: Integrative Learning for Compassionate Action in an Interconnected World.” More than 600 participants from 251 colleges and universities attended. Participants included faculty, administrators (including many presidents), chaplains, and student life professionals. Representative institutions included research universities, comprehensive universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges (for details, visit www.heartofeducation.org).

The conference provided a historic moment for CIIS as it clearly positioned the Institute as a leader in integrative teaching and learning, an emerging movement in American higher education. As a result of the visibility and acknowledgment of CIIS at this gathering, there is a stronger sense of purpose and commitment to our core educational mission among CIIS faculty and staff members. The CIIS community is now more aware that its educational vision, developed and expanded from the foundation built by the Chaudhuris, is increasingly valued by other colleges and universities. This shift will allow CIIS to collaborate with many colleges and universities in advancing an integral model of education.

I hope that you will continue to participate in the ever-growing CIIS community. I strongly encourage you to visit the Institute’s Web site (www.ciis.edu) for exciting workshops, concerts, and lectures offered by CIIS Public Programs, and art exhibits curated by Spirit in the Arts. The Office of Alumni continues to gather alumni and friends in regional circles across the country, as well as on travel programs to India, Mongolia, Japan, and Scotland, among other locales. Most importantly, stay in touch with CIIS by sending Richard Buggs, Dean of Alumni, your e-mail address at rbuggs@ciis.edu.

Cordially,

Joseph Subbiondo
President

In Celebration of Bina Chaudhuri
CIIS Cofounder and Friend
1922–2006

On December 27, 2006 CIIS’s beloved cofounder Bina Chaudhuri died at the age of 84. We pay our respects—and celebrate a life that exemplified the true integral spirit—in this issue of CIIS Today. Please turn to pages 4 and 5 to read several alumni’s moving tributes to a woman renowned for her generosity, wisdom, support, and tireless efforts on behalf of CIIS.
In this issue, we talk with Shankar Bhattacharya, who, along with his wife, Kimi, co-founded Haridas Chaudhuri when he officiated their wedding in 1973. The Bhattacharyas have generously supported the Institute for many years until the mid-90’s when they lost contact with the Institute for many years. When we returned, we learned that Haridas Chaudhuri had passed away. We lost contact with the Institute for many years until the middle of the 90’s when we learned that many of our friends were in touch with Mr. Chaudhuri’s wife, Bina. We started to attend CII’s annual Chaudhuri Dinner to learn more about the school. We were very impressed by the vision and the philosophy of the Institute. We believed that an institute like CII, which offers the teachings of Western philosophy alongside Eastern philosophy, was very important for our globalized world. We wanted to be part of such an institute.

Why do you donate to CII?

Beside the fact that Haridas Chaudhuri played a critical role in our lives, his teachings are essential for today’s complex world where religious differences and misunderstandings have proliferated hatred between human beings. Through our contributions, we want to see CII play a stronger role in creating a better understanding between various religions and cultures.

Why do you believe in philanthropic giving?

My wife and I strongly believe that we have a social and moral obligation to give back some of our wealth and wisdom to the community that has given us so much. We hope our contributions will help our community to be stronger and a better place to live.

What do you hope to achieve during your time as a trustee?

I would like to see the school become even more financially strong, and I hope to help CII reach its highest potential. I envision more scholarships for students and more opportunities given to the faculty to perform research. I plan to work with the other board members and the president to aggressively increase the school’s revenue through sources other than tuition.

“We believed that an institute like CII, which offers the teachings of Western philosophy alongside Eastern philosophy, was very important for our globalized world.”

—Shankar Bhattacharya
CIIS Open New Integral Counseling Center

In its ongoing effort to provide clinical experience for its psychology students, CIIS opened its fifth counseling center on January 24, 2007. Located at 507 Polk Street in San Francisco, the Golden Gate Integral Counseling Center offers low-cost professional psychotherapy to the community as well as provides a solid training ground for CIIS Integral Counseling Psychology students.

The Golden Gate Integral Counseling Center is the third clinic that focuses on integral counseling. The other two are located on Pierce Street and Church Street. The integral counseling model is based on the principle that each client is viewed as a whole person and that all aspects of the person are included in the healing process. The Golden Gate Integral Counseling Center offers a unique focus on a transpersonal perspective in its training program. “At Golden Gate, we include an explicit emphasis on how spirituality can inform and support the practice of psychotherapy,” said Dr. Judith Kinst, Golden Gate’s clinical director.

In addition to the three integral counseling centers, CIIS has a Center for Somatic Psychotherapy, staffed by master’s level Somatic Psychology students, and the Psychological Services Center, which provides training for doctoral clinical psychology students.

Integrative Counseling Psychology graduate students must accumulate 150 hours of direct client contact as a prerequisite to receiving their master’s degree in counseling psychology. Students can perform their yearlong practicum at the counseling centers or at other community agencies. “Golden Gate’s main goal is to provide good solid training to the students, so that when they walk out the door after a year, they have confidence in themselves as therapists,” said Dr. Kinst. “We also provide good, quality low-fee treatment to the community. It’s really a win-win situation for everyone.”

The center currently has six students on staff, each seeing three to four clients. At the center’s client base grows, it will admit more students each semester. Dr. Kinst estimates that a total of 15 student trainees on staff by year-end. An internship program for the trainees will be established in the future. Students also receive weekly group supervision and trainings, and perform group process work at the center.

The new center was made possible by a major gift of $100,000 from the J.C. Kellogg Foundation in New York. The Kellogg Foundation has generously supported all of the master’s level counseling centers. “CIIS is extremely grateful to the J.C. Kellogg Foundation for this significant investment as well as for its generous support of the counseling centers at CIIS and other projects,” said Director of Development Dorotea Reyna.

CIIS Travel Program Expands

Offerings for 2007-2008

Trips to Scotland, Siberia, Japan, and India planned.

By Richard Bugs, Dean of Alumni and Director of Travel Program

The alumni and friends journey to India was modified this year so that travelers could experience more of the subcontinent. After spending the first week in India at Auroville, the universal township founded on the principles of Sri Aurobindo, the group of 24 flew north to Delhi and witnessed the simple, powerful tribute to Mahatma Ghandi’s life at Birla House. The ambitious itinerary also included a few days in Jaipur, the Rajasthani city of pink stone hued as pilgrims made their way down to the ghats for rituals and baths.

While noshing on tandoori chicken and tikka masala, Marinites indulge in intellectual nourishment during CIIS’s new “Lunch for the Soul” series, launched in October 2006. The popular lunchtime series, held at Gaylord India Restaurant in Sausalito, introduces the Marin community to scholars, scientists, health professionals, authors, community leaders, and artists, among others, whose life work reflects CIIS’s mission of integrative education, peace, justice, health, transformation, and spiritual development. “The central theme of the ongoing series is engaged spirituality”—meeting the world with personal and professional spiritual strength and purpose,” said CIIS President Joseph Subbiondo.

Some 40 to 60 people have attended the monthly talks. Featured guests have included cardiologist Dean Ornish, Marin-based Jungian analyst and author Jean Shinoda Bolen, CIIS philosophy professor Richard Tarnas, choreographer and teacher Anna Halprin, director and actor Corey Fischer, and poet and Rumi translator Coleman Barks.

The series is “a great opportunity to share CIIS with the Marin community,” said Director of Development Dorotea Reyna. CIIS trustee Kiallore Kiplalani, owner of Gaylord India Restaurant, and the Pacific Sun newspaper cosponsor the lecture programs.

Never Too Late

This August, Bachelor of Arts Completion student Georgia Jackson fulfills a lifelong dream to receive an undergraduate degree.

Georgia Jackson always wanted to get a college degree. But a bad turn of events in her life prevented her from doing so—until now. The 53-year-old native San Franciscan will complete CIIS’s Bachelor of Arts Degree Completion (BAC) program in August. Jackson says that she was drawn to the spiritual and interpersonal environment of CIIS, noting: “Everyone is so connected here.”

Jackson considers herself a lifelong learner. She started taking courses at San Francisco City College in 1974, but a long battle with substance abuse interfered with her desire to graduate from college. With her life back in order—she has been clean and sober since 1994—she decided that it was finally time to get her bachelor’s degree. In 1997, she returned to City College and earned a Drug and Alcohol Certificate in 2003 and then an associate’s degree in 2004.

Jackson explored several colleges before choosing CIIS upon the advice of friend and CIIS alumna Briana Morey. Jackson was particularly attracted to the BAC program, which is designed to accommodate working adults, because it fit perfectly with her work schedule as an evaluator, researcher, and interviewer for San Francisco’s Department of Public Health.

She was also supported in her decision by receiving much-needed financial assistance from CIIS as the recipient of the Asia Cummings Memorial Scholarship. This endowed scholarship fund was established in 2005 by Pamela and David Smith in memory of their daughter, Asia Leah Cummings, who was admitted to the BAC program before her death in 2004 at age 21. Jackson currently evaluates two grant-funded programs for the Department of Public Health: Women Integrated Services Health (WISH), which helps female offenders with mental health issues; and the Standing Against Global Exploitation (SAGE) Project, which assists victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Her duties include conducting intensive baseline, six-month and 12-month interviews with program participants to gauge the effectiveness of the programs. Jackson also works as a relief counselor at Baker Places, a nonprofit organization providing an array of community-based services in San Franciscans with mental health, substance, and/or HIV/AIDS related issues.

According to Jackson, BAC’s “cohort learning” model, where a group of students study and learn together throughout the academic year, has improved her writing and listening skills and given her a sense of connection to a community of kindred spirits. These skills, along with her past personal struggles with addiction, have helped her better relate to and serve her clients.

“I know where the clients are coming from,” said Jackson, who wants to eventually earn a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling. “Some of the people I see are the people I used to get high with. They see me clean and say, ‘Georgia, if you can do it, I can do it.’”

Food for Thought

New “Lunch for the Soul” Lecture Series a Success

While noshing on tandoori chicken and tikka masala, Marinites indulge in intellectual nourishment during CIIS’s new “Lunch for the Soul” lecture series, launched in October 2006. The popular lunchtime series, held at Gaylord India Restaurant in Sausalito, introduces the Marin community to scholars, scientists, health professionals, authors, community leaders, and artists, among others, whose life work reflects CIIS’s mission of integrative education, peace, justice, health, transformation, and spiritual development. “The central theme of the ongoing series is engaged spirituality”—meeting the world with personal and professional spiritual strength and purpose,” said CIIS President Joseph Subbiondo.

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In Celebration of Bina Chaudhuri
CIIS Cofounder, Teacher, and Friend
1922-2006

W e all understand that if you pay attention to the presence of a person when you are in that person’s company you can receive a very special kind of knowledge—the knowledge that comes from direct experience. From this perspective, Bina, the humbliest of people who shunned pretension and insincerity, Bina the enthusiast, ever ready to throw pretension and insincerity; Bina the wise Elder, held in high esteem by both the Asian and American communities, was a great teacher.

Bina, as we know, came from the Land of the Goddess and inherited in her very nature the qualities of India’s greatest Devis: her intelligence and grace from Saraswati, her generosity from Laxmi, her tenacity from Durga. She was for us a living Divine Mother.

Bina’s role in the founding and growing of the Institute was not to be out in front like Haridas, but rather to be the ground on which we stand, creating the foundation upon which and in which the formation of students can take place. This role is essential but the consequence of that decision is this very moment we share together. Do you know? We are the beneficiaries of a rare curriculum indeed! We were encouraged to develop a sense of ourselves that we could actually live with; we were trained to listen to the wisdom present in silence; we were encouraged to chase down the Divine; we were invited to bring together heaven and earth. As it turns out, we are that Higher Purpose that Bina had in mind when she took that risk to keep the doors open.

And so, though it is too late for your ears to receive these words, I return the keys to the door of the house and do not ask you, “Are you a princess?” She may have been that to them, or a mother to others, or a goddess, or another archetypal projection. To me, Bina was a real human being and a selfless karmayogini with the biggest heart and greatest wisdom whose life was a great sacrifice in the service of the highest spiritual values. May our hearts remember her truth.

—Bahman A. K. Shirazi, PhD (EWP ’94)

Bina told me that no one is indispensable in the greater work of the Spirit, yet no one can deny the most special role she played along with Dr. Chaudhuri in bridging the wide chasm between Eastern and Western cultures. She liked to tell the story that once in San Francisco two little girls, seeing her on the street wearing a sari, asked her, “Are you a princess?” She may have been that to them, or a mother to others, or a goddess, or another archetypal projection. To me, Bina was a real human being and a selfless karmayogini with the biggest heart and greatest wisdom whose life was a great sacrifice in the service of the highest spiritual values. May our hearts remember her truth.

—Anne Teich, PhD, (PAR, ’85, ’90)

For many of us the most visible side of Bina was that of a generous and nurturing woman—there were always cookies and candy on her desk, and we always knew that we would get to eat all that delicious Indian food on any occasion that one was fortunate to be in her home. What was also true was her deep understanding of what was going on around us, be it her knowledge of the philosophical systems that are integral to the CIIS experience or her understanding of the concrete workings of the school. The “old timer” can tell you about the essential role she played in keeping the school going after Dr. Chaudhuri’s death. Although humble and unassuming, Bina was/is a big spirit, wise and loving, and she will be missed.

—I finally take my leave. I have gained my vacation. Please let me go.
I bowed down to all of you in reverence and bid adieu.
I returned the keys to the door of the house and do not demand any claim to it.
I only ask from all of you your love and best wishes.
I received more than I gave.
I have been your neighbor for so long.
I received more than I gave.
The night has ended and the dawn is here.
The little lamp in the corner is now extinguished.
The call has come for my journey.
—Roger Mardern, PhD (Clinical Psychology ’02)

This poem is from the Gitabitan by Rabindranath Tagore, one of Bina’s favorite poets. It was translated from Bengali by Bina and read at a CIIS gathering in 2003.

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I have been your neighbor for so long.
I received more than I gave.
The night has ended and the dawn is here.
The little lamp in the corner is now extinguished.
The call has come for my journey.
—so I am off and bid adieu.

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In honor of Bina Chaudhuri’s remarkable life, we asked several CIIS alums who knew Bina to share their thoughts on the Institute’s visionary cofounder, tireless champion, inspirational leader, and, always, beloved friend.