

## **Remembrance Scholars: What happens after Remembrance Week?**

Remembrance Scholars' responsibility isn't solely to organise and coordinate Remembrance Week events, despite this being what many people believe. So what do scholars do once Remembrance Week concludes? As a matter of fact, they have a much broader purpose that extends further than the Syracuse University campus, reaching members of the local and wider community, Lockerbie and beyond.

Serving as a Remembrance Scholar is more than just organising Remembrance events (although this is one of their biggest roles), it is a year-long program that challenges, encourages and inspires each and every individual who has the privilege of being involved. This year the Remembrance scholarship advisors integrated a new initiative known as Act Forward Projects for the 2024/25 cohort to undertake; this is what our advisors said about the projects:

“The Act Forward projects were implemented to provide Remembrance Scholars with a structured, academically focused way to deepen their understanding of the Pan Am 103 tragedy and the broader impact of terrorism. By engaging in research, outreach, education, and creative projects, Scholars will not only expand their own knowledge but also contribute to the campus and broader communities.

These projects aim to ensure Scholars learn about all victims (not just the SU students) and foster an academic approach to remembrance and action. Through collaboration with faculty mentors and structured presentations, the initiative promotes sustained engagement while embodying our motto: “Look Back, Act Forward.””

Each year 35 Syracuse University seniors are honoured as Remembrance Scholars. Scholars are chosen based not only on distinguished academics but on creative work, citizenship and service to the community. The Act Forward projects and the initiative they instill allow Scholars to continue to pursue these endeavors whilst leaving a lasting impact on Syracuse University. As well, these projects enable Scholars to add their own perspective to what it means to honour the 35 students and all 270 victims who were tragically killed in the December 21st 1988 terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

## **How do Act Forward Projects work?**

This year, Scholars were given the option of seven different action projects, with each project assigned a team of five individuals. The seven action groups are: Understanding Grief & Mourning; International Law & Justice; Preventing Violent Extremism; Monuments & Public Memory; Media Coverage of Disasters; Crisis Management & Response Policies/Procedures; and Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue / Civil Discourse. At the start of the year, each group found

a faculty mentor who could provide connections and insight into specific areas aligning with their project aims and expectations, whilst also providing support to Scholars throughout the year. Each project has its own individual goals and aims, whilst maintaining an overall focus of positively impacting the community. An overview of these aims and goals are as follows:

Understanding Grief & Mourning's goal to remember the victims of Pan Am Flight 103 was to create a mural that would bring the university campus together through a community painting session. Evelina Torres, a member of this group, said: "it would allow art to serve as a means to deal with grief. We have emphasized the importance of memorializing and looking back to remember the tragedy and the victims lives while also acting forward in encouraging all community members to participate in a community effort that symbolizes a light moving forward."

International Law and Justice's Olivia Reid said: "Our group aims to explore the expansion of Public Law 118-37, enacted to allow video and telephonic access to the upcoming trial of Abu Agila Mas'ud – the accused bomb maker in the Lockerbie Air Disaster – to victims and families. Our goal is to produce a thought-provoking piece on remote access to criminal proceedings and disseminate it to relevant stakeholders in an effort to ensure that victims of other atrocities are also afforded similar or better accommodations to witness and be involved in relevant legal proceedings."

Preventing Violent Extremism's goal was to "educate and exchange ideas with the campus community regarding the presence and prevention of violent extremism, particularly at the local level" whilst also providing online resources in the hopes of students being more proactive in preventing extremism.

Monuments & Public Memory's main goal was to create a short documentary highlighting the evolution and reasoning behind the Sitting in Solidarity event held during Remembrance Week. Sitting in Solidarity is a chair installation that remains on the quad throughout the entire Remembrance Week, where the chairs are laid out in a formation corresponding to that of the plane. These chairs represent the students, passengers, and Air Cabin Crew. For 35 minutes, one day during Remembrance Week, each scholar sits in the seat of the individual(s) they are representing. They sit in complete silence, thus creating a powerful visual image for the entire campus community to see.

Media Reportage of Disasters' main goal was to develop and create a syllabus for a class that could be offered to students in following years. This would be a class that highlights the way in which the media responds to disasters and that is driven off a case study module, allowing students to learn and uncover the media's role in major terrorist attacks.

Crisis Management & Response's main goal is to build a Remembrance module into First Year Seminar (FYS) a class that is mandatory for all first-year students at Syracuse University. This module would look in depth at the events that took place on December 21st 1988, and the repercussions thereafter. This would give students a greater understanding of the disaster, as well as Syracuse University's history and what it means to be a student here.

Finally, Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue / Civil Discourse's main goal was to bridge the gap in community communication by equipping student leaders with tools to engage and encourage their fellow students to experience and manage difficult conversations in a respectful and productive way.

### **Why did the Scholars chosen Act Forward Project stand out to them?**

Mason Romero, a member of Monuments & Public Memory, visited Lockerbie in May of his sophomore year and visited two impactful monuments: Tundergarth Church Watch Room and The Garden of Remembrance. He said "Both of these places are a beautiful display of keeping the memories of the individuals involved in the attack as well as honoring who they were. When I saw the list of options (action groups), I remembered my time at these places and knew that I wanted to help bring awareness to/create something that was similar in nature to these." Additionally, as a music major, Mason was drawn to the concept of using "sound and oral reports to share the stories of everyone involved."

Natalie Dolenga, a member of Prevention of Violent Extremism said, "I was initially drawn to Remembrance largely due to my interest in national security, and aspiration to prevent terrorist attacks such as Pan Am 103 from occurring again...It felt like a way to make tangible change, despite the vastness and perceived impossibility of "preventing extremism" at higher levels and greater scopes."

As a collective, members of Media Reportage of Disasters said, "The way that societies process and engage with crises is fundamentally connected to the way that the media covers them. The media has the power to draw attention to disasters, cultivating support for the victims and pressuring stakeholder groups. However, the media also has the power to further exploit disaster victims and sensationalize crises, prioritizing business over humanity. This has too often been the case historically, particularly in regards to the coverage of the Pan Am 103 tragedy. As students at a university with highly acclaimed diplomacy and communications programs, we believe that this topic is deeply intertwined not only with our status as Remembrance Scholars, but also with our identities as Syracuse University students".

## **What have the Scholars achieved so far?**

As the academic year draws to a close a selection of projects are completed. For example, Understanding Grief & Mourning have successfully created a community mural that will be displayed in Hendricks Chapel during Remembrance Week and on the 21st of December each year. International Law & Justice also completed their thought-provoking 10 page-paper on remote access to criminal proceedings. Monuments and Public Memory have filmed, edited and produced their short film highlighting the evolution of and reasons behind the Sitting in Solidarity Remembrance event. The video starts with the campus backdrop and the chairs laid out in a formation corresponding to the plane. The Scholars walk to their respective chairs to begin the 35 minute reflection in silence. The documentary features Remembrance Scholars discussing the impact of this installation. It also features advisors Judith O'Rourke (who was working for the University when the diasaster occurred) and Kelly Rodoski (who was a first-year student at Syracuse University when the disaster happened). The short documentary can be watched [here](#). Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue also carried out all three of their intended workshops with three culturally diverse organizations on campus, including the Hindu Student Association, Barnes Health Centre Health Promotion & Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority. They completed a pre- and post-session survey for which their main findings concluded improvements in respectful communication, willingness to engage in difficult conversations, and confidence in navigating organisational disagreements, demonstrating the overall positive impact of the workshops. Despite not being fully completed other groups have made incredible progress, such that they have paved a path for fellow Scholars to continue in the following years. For example, Media Coverage of Disasters have generated a course syllabus and are refining final details whilst searching for faculty and professors who would be willing to deliver this to students. Crisis Management & Response have built a Remembrance module that can be incorporated into FYS, with the hopes that the 2025/26 cohort of Scholars can properly implement it, within the next year. Finally, Preventing Violent Extremism held a panel event that facilitated a discussion regarding prevention of violent extremism, which was a very successful event with high student interest. They hope that the future cohort can work to establish this as a recurring lecture series on extremism within the United States and further engage campus faculty in the Remembrance program.

This is only the beginning of Act Forward Projects and already, together our 2024/25 cohort of Remembrance Scholars have achieved an incredible amount, and impacted the community in ways they could only imagine when they stepped into their roles in August. We can't wait to see what the future holds for our next cohort of Scholars and beyond.

More information regarding the Act Forward Projects can be found in the Syracuse University Archives

Below is a list of the 7 Act Forward Projects, their respective Remembrance Scholars & faculty mentors.

**Action Group:** Understanding Grief and Mourning

**Members:** Alba Aljiboury, Tabitha Hulme, Abigail Jones, Kelsey Leary, Evelina Torres

**Faculty Mentor:** Jennifer DeLucia

**Action Group:** International Law and Justice

**Members:** Jenna Poma, Olivia Reid, Justine Robin Smith, Abigael Scott, Linda Baguma

**Faculty Mentor:** Requested not to be disclosed

**Action Group:** Preventing Violent Extremism

**Members:** Tanner Boshart, Danis Cammett, Natalie Dolenga, Alice Savane, Josh Spodek

**Faculty Mentor:** Prof. Margaret Thompson

**Action Group:** Monuments and Public Memory

**Members:** Sophia Moore, Mason Romero, Mason Garbus, Joshua Garvin, Sierra Kaplan.

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. José (Peppie) Calvar

**Action Group:** Media Coverage of Disasters

**Members:** Charlotte Ebel, Luke Elliott, Nadia Lyngdoh-Sommer, Cheryl Olanga, Tia Poquette

**Faculty Mentor:** Professor Arien Rozelle

**Action Group:** Crisis Management and Response Policies/Procedures

**Members:** Leondra Tyler, Yifan Shen, Ryan Myers, Mark Nzasi, Zachary Murray

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Shannon Schantz

**Action Group:** Intergroup Dialogue / Civil Discourse

**Members:** Rajan Safal Joshi, Alekhya Rajasekaran, Alyssa Sutherland, Adam Baltaxe, Adya Aditi Parida

**Faculty Mentor:** Diane Swords

**Remembrance Program Advisors :** Samantha Trumble, Jolynn Parker, Judith O'Rourke, Kelly Rodoski, Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn

*Written by 2024/25 Lockerbie Scholars,*

**Anna Newbould & Cameron Colville**