



Stockton Alumna's Vision of One Million Bones Displayed at Washington D.C.'s National Mall

Artist and Activist Naomi Natale Strives to Conquer Genocide By Educating
the Public Using Collaborative Art Practices

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Galloway Township, NJ- To illustrate the impact of genocide throughout the world, Stockton alumna Naomi Natale envisioned one million human bones spread across the nation's capital—that vision became a tangible reality during a short term art installation at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

For the past three years, Natale, a 2003 photography graduate, has been collecting handcrafted bones made by more than 250,000 artists, students and activists from all 50 states and 30 countries. The installation's mission is to empower viewers to stand up against genocide. Natale calls her One Million Bones project a symbolic mass grave and a visible petition.

From June 8-10, the bones, sculpted with clay, wire and other art materials, were installed by volunteers and displayed at the National Mall covering the area between 3rd and 7th streets. Prior to the National Mall, smaller preview installations were displayed in Albuquerque and New Orleans.

"As a visual learner, I'm constantly constructing images in my mind of the information I consume, and many times these images have stayed with me and moved me to do things with that information," Natale said at the Oslo Freedom Forum last year.

The image of one million bones came to Natale after reading Philip Gourevitch's book *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families*. She has worked to transform the image she constructed from Gourevitch's words into a project that educates and involves individuals in raising awareness about genocide.

She chose the bone as a symbol to represent the victims and survivors of genocide and the ability to connect with one another as human beings.

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Wendel White, distinguished professor of Art and Natale's adviser at Stockton, traveled to Washington D.C. on Saturday with his daughter Amanda to volunteer during the installation.

"It's hard to imagine the logistics that went into organizing this event. The volunteer efforts were very well structured to ensure that everyone knew what to do," White explained.

"It was choreographed so that there were stations with piles of bones and teams to lay out the bones. I really got a sense of the people moving in and out amongst the magnitude of bones. The experience was moving," he said.

A cellist performed during the installation making it serene and meditative White added. Volunteers dressed in white.

"As a student, she was someone who brought a remarkable quality to her work. She has lots of passion for what she's doing on a global scale," he said.

At Stockton, Natale took a course titled Literature and Culture of South Africa with Dr. Linda Nelson, professor of Anthropology and Africana Studies. "That was a turning point for her," said White.

During a winter break, Natale traveled to Africa with an NGO group and worked on a photography independent study. It was there that she was exposed to poverty, famine and social injustices.

Dr. Linda Nelson attended the installation on Saturday morning and observed the bones being laid. "I found Naomi and was so happy and grateful," she explained. It wasn't easy as there were thousands of people present.

"Naomi was passionate about her new found mission and certain that she would find a way to work for global change. These are the gifts we treasure as educators," Nelson said.

"I remember looking at a young woman and thinking how remarkable it was that she was going to a country sight unseen because she wanted to help children," she recalled.

White noted that Natale's experience as a TED fellow, her persistent diligence over the years and her eagerness to reach out for guidance have helped her achieve her goals.

Gail Rosenthal, director of the Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center, attended the display Monday with 13 Stockton students and 150 eighth graders, teachers and staff from the Emma C. Attales Elementary School in Absecon.

"A year ago, Naomi came to Jan Colijn and I with her idea and asked if we could help her. We immediately said yes," Rosenthal explained.

Dr. Colijn, dean emeritus of the School of General Studies, noted Natale's impact on global education pointing out that the Bezos Foundation committed to donate \$1 for every bone made up to \$500,000 towards the CARE organization's work on the ground in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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Natale's mission of genocide awareness is also a goal of Stockton's Holocaust Resource Center Rosenthal said. "People used to say never again, and now we know it isn't true. Naomi's mission of awareness for our future leaders is very important," she added.

Stockton students were eager to get involved. Members of the anti-genocide student organization, Stockton Take Action Now: Darfur (STAND), crafted and contributed 187 bones to the project.

Attales students donated hundreds of bones over the past year. They didn't want their involvement to end at making bones, so they joined Stockton on a trip to the display.

Rosenthal and the Stockton students had the opportunity to meet Natale. Rosenthal said, "Naomi told us that Linda Nelson changed her life by opening her eyes to injustices around the world and that Wendel White helped her to make a concrete plan that creates an intersection between art and activism."

Irvin Moreno Rodriguez, a junior Criminal Justice major minoring in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and STAND president, said, "I remember walking up to it and the first thing we saw were the one million bones. It took my breath away."

"It hit home. We read the news and see it on TV, but seeing bones and parts of a skeleton in an open site makes it click in our minds and instills emotions. We saw the importance in a visual way," he said.

An adult human skeleton is made up of 206 bones. If all of the one million bones were pieced together, assuming there were equal numbers of each type of bone, over 4,800 skeletons could be created. That number is small in comparison to the number of those lost to ongoing genocides.

For more information on the One Million Bones project, visit <http://www.onemillionbones.org>.

Photo: [Installation](#)

Credit: Wendel White/ The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

Caption: One million handmade bones were installed and displayed at the National Mall June 8-10. More than 250,000 volunteers have helped to create and install the bones.

Photo: [Wendel White and Naomi](#)

Credit: Amanda White

Caption: Wendel White, distinguished professor of Art and Natale's adviser while she attended Stockton as a photography major, attended the installation as a volunteer and proud supporter. Natale credits White with helping her to interconnect her passions for activism and the arts.

Photo: [Stockton students and Naomi](#)

Credit: The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

Caption: Gail Rosenthal, director of the Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center, and a group of Stockton students meet with Naomi at the display.

Photo: [Irvin and Naomi](#)

Credit: Gail Rosenthal/ The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

Caption: Irvin Moreno Rodriguez, a junior Criminal Justice major minoring in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and STAND president, had the opportunity to meet Naomi Natale at the One Million Bones display June 10.

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