

The Grant Seeker

A quarterly spotlight recognizing excellence in grantsmanship by a Barry University employee

Laura Finley, PhD Peace of Mind

By Shannon Brown, Director of Foundation Relations, Division of Institutional Advancement

Typically I write the Grant Seeker profiles from a third party standpoint. I decided to write this, my final Grant Seeker assignment, from my own perspective.

Dr. Laura Finley is many things to many people: She is a mother, a wife, a twin sister, a professor, a colleague, an advocate. Yet, above of all, she is a friend; in fact, one of the best I have. Laura was one of the first grant seekers I met at Barry University. She wanted to discuss an RFP that invited proposals to “serve adolescent victims of dating violence.” Propose we would – time and time again – to no avail. Self-proclaimed the “Typhoid Mary of Grants,” Dr. Finley joked that, at the *very least*, she deserved a Notice of Award for the most unsuccessful proposal attempts by a grant seeker in history. But unlike Typhoid Mary, Dr. Finley seeks to improve the human condition. Whether it took 10 years or 1,000 attempts, she was going to find the funding necessary to protect and promote women.

In 2012, the funding finally came, in the form of a grant from the City of North Miami to coordinate a peer education program about healthy relationships. In 2013, a second award – this one to fund a speaker series about peacemaking and gender-based violence; two poignant successes for the second highest proposal-producing faculty member at Barry University.

Dr. Finley earned her undergraduate degree in history, her graduate degree in education and professional development, and her PhD in sociology, with a specialization in race and ethnicity, from Western Michigan University. She has taught numerous sociology-related courses, such as Perspective Consciousness and Social Justice and Poverty in Society, at no less than 10 colleges and universities around the nation. Laura has authored 13



books, her most recent titled *Peace and Conflict Studies Research: A Qualitative Perspective*. She has contributed chapters to more than 25 books, has more than 50 peer-reviewed publications, and is a frequent contributor to The Huffington Post.

Dr. Finley has received countless honors for her social work, including the United Nations – Broward County Community Service Award in 2010. She serves on numerous local, state, and national boards, such as No More Tears, the Peace and Justice Studies Association, Floridians Against the Death Penalty, and the Humanity Project. She founded the Broward Chapter of Amnesty International in 2008. As a certified community trainer, Laura travels locally and nationally delivering speeches and providing trainings on non-violent conflict resolution, social justice, and social anthropology, and she donates every dollar she earns from her book royalties and speaking engagements to the fight against violence.

Perhaps the most notable of Dr. Finley’s accomplishments at Barry University is the annual College Brides Walk. Since February 2010, Dr. Finley has led hundreds of local students and community members, dressed in bridal gowns and tuxedos, on a 6-mile march to raise awareness and funding for victims of domestic violence. The event results in more media coverage, convenes more community and university partners, and engages more participation than any other service program in Barry University’s history.

Through my friendship with Dr. Finley, I have come to understand the extent of the domestic violence epidemic, particularly in South Florida. Dr. Finley often says, “Violence against women is a community problem deserving of a community response.” Somy Ali, president and founder of No More Tears, a nonprofit organization serving mostly immigrant women victims of severe domestic abuse, has witnessed Dr. Finley’s unique compassion for victims. During a particularly difficult intake, Dr. Finley was so heartbroken by a woman’s circumstances that she gave the woman her car; she literally handed over her keys.

The conditions of my own life have improved as a result of Dr. Finley’s influence. She inspires me to be a better woman, mother, athlete and friend. Without her realizing it, she has informed my inner dialogue about what is wrong, what is right, and above all, what is worth fighting for – peacefully, that is.

Barry thanks you

It’s people like this who move Barry forward. If you are interested in pursuing a grant opportunity or have any questions, please contact the Department of Grants and Sponsored Programs at 305-899-3173.