

Press Release

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Center for First Amendment Studies at Cal State Long Beach Announces Winners of 2nd Annual Clarke Graduate Student Monograph Contest

The Center for First Amendment Studies at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) has announced the winners of its \$35,000 second annual Richard A. Clarke Graduate Student Monograph Contest, which was created last year in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

First place and a scholarship of \$20,000 has been awarded to Melissa Jane Kronfeld, who is pursuing a Ph.D. in the Global Affairs Program at Rutgers University. Kronfeld's monograph was titled "Killing Them With Kindness: A Softer Approach to Preventing Violent Extremism and Countering Radicalization in the War on Terrorism."

"I was humbled and honored to receive the award knowing I was competing against such an excellent group of student-scholars from across the nation," said Kronfeld, 29, who expects to complete her Ph.D. in global governance with a focus on security issues in May 2014. "I must admit, I read the email announcing the winner at least nine times before I believed it was not a mistake and I actually had won. Then I called a fellow classmate, who insisted I enter the competition, to share with him the good news. It is an amazing experience to contribute to academic scholarship in such a way."

Graduate students from all across the country participated in the contest by submitting monographs that answered the following question: Beyond capturing and killing terrorists, some nations have seemingly evolved effective means of preventing violent extremism and countering radicalization. 1. What are some of the better examples of such successful programs? 2. How could such programs be more broadly utilized to combat terrorism against the United States?

"In my monograph I examine terrorist de-radicalization and disengagement programs in the Middle East, South East Asia and Europe, focusing on the best lessons learned from the religious versus secular approach, and their applicability to the United States' War on Terrorism," Kronfeld explained. "I posit that soft counter-terrorism practices are as equally important as hard counter-terrorism tactics (i.e. capturing and killing terrorists) and I suggest that by focusing on the former, in addition to the latter, much can be gained in the fight against violent Islamist extremism.

"I conclude by noting that soft counter terrorism practices are not a panacea," she added, but rather a useful tool in deterring and rehabilitating extremists."

Second place and a \$10,000 scholarship is going to Jiayi Zhou, a Ph.D. candidate in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. Zhou's monograph was titled "Local Solutions and Community-Oriented Policing."

Finally, Tamara Zaman from the University of Utah was named the third-place winner, which included a \$5,000 scholarship. A Ph.D. student in Utah's Department of Communication, Zaman's monograph was titled "Counterterrorism: Seeking Successful Policies at the International Frontier."

The contest was made possible through a grant from Steven C. Markoff, who conceived and compiled the on-line data base www.911plus.org. The winning monographs will be posted on the website of the CSULB center's website at www.firstamendmentstudies.org and on www.911plus.org site.

"I'm pleased that the A-Mark Foundation funded the second annual Richard A. Clarke scholarship competition on national security," Markoff said. "The essays of the three winners and the other entrants illuminate new policy options for dealing with terrorism in thoughtful and creative ways."

Markoff is in discussions with CSULB's Center for First Amendment Studies regarding renewing the contest for a third year.

The contest was named in honor of Richard Clarke, who came to widespread public attention for his role as counter-terrorism czar in the Clinton and Bush administrations in March 2004, when he appeared on the "60 Minutes" television news magazine, released his memoir about his service in government, "Against All Enemies," and testified before the 9/11 Commission. In all three instances, Clarke was sharply critical of the Bush Administration's attitude toward counter-terrorism before the 9/11 terrorist attacks and of the decision to go to war with Iraq.