The Jesuit value of being men and women for and with others is the very heart of Creighton's Backpack Journalism project, a collaboration between the Department of Theology and Department of Journalism, Media and Computing. Led by Dr. John O'Keefe of Theology and Dr. Carol Zuegner and Tim Guthrie from JM&C, 14 students traveled to northern Uganda to produce an award-winning film, “Mato Opur (Justice & Reconciliation).”

The filmmaking is part of a five-week summer course that immerses students from a variety of majors first into a weeklong boot camp of learning how to shoot and edit video, write blogs and stories. They also learn about and discuss the elements of social justice and the Catholic Church. Armed with that knowledge and backpacks brimming with tripods, cameras and sound equipment, the students traveled to Uganda to explore the efforts of the Catholic Church to build justice, peace and reconciliation after a civil war that lasted more than 20 years.

The experience is a transformative one. Sophomore Hannah O'Keefe says witnessing firsthand the heartbreaking struggles of the people changed her: “Although I saw the horrifying effects of extreme poverty and civil war, I also found myself surrounded by inspiring and hopeful people working for a better future. I think it is safe to say that, thanks to the people I encountered on the other side of the world, I am one step closer to truly being a woman for other and have a reinvigorated thirst to seek justice.”

2011 Backpack Journalists: Student director Peter Freeze, Marybeth Carlough, Matthew Dorwart, Chase Ehlers, Elizabeth Fredrickson, Sara Gentzler, Michelle Hancock, Milana Jordan, Bridger McQuillan, Molly Miller, Megan Murobayashi, Hannah O’Keefe, Kira Olson and Aurelia Roddy.

Blessed to be a Witness
Backpack Journalism in Uganda
John O'Keefe, Tim Guthrie and Carol Zuegner and the Backpack Journalism students

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