

Ramapo College of New Jersey

Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* among the top public universities (master's) in the region, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes mistaken for a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of approximately 5,600 students, and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers three graduate programs as well as articulated programs with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and New York Chiropractic College.

Undergraduate students choose to concentrate their studies in one of five schools with more than 700 course offerings and 40 academic programs. Ramapo College boasts an average student/faculty ratio of 17:1 and average class size of 23, affording students the opportunity to develop close ties to the College's exceptional faculty.

The College's mission is focused on the four "pillars" of a Ramapo education: international, intercultural, interdisciplinary and experiential, all of which are incorporated throughout the curriculum and extracurriculum. The international mission is further accomplished through a wide range of study abroad and student exchange links with institutions all over the world through the New Jersey State Consortium for International Studies (NJSCIS). Additional experiential programs include internships, co-op, and service learning.

A campus-wide building program during recent years has resulted in the completion of the Anisfield School of Business academic facility, a central feature of the main entrance to the campus; the Bill Bradley Sports and Recreation Center, with its 2,200-seat arena, fitness center, climbing wall, track and dance/aerobics studio; the Overlook and Laurel residence halls and the Village apartment complex. The Angelica and Russ Berrie Center for Performing and Visual Arts, completed in 1999, houses performance theaters, art galleries, and specialized spaces devoted to fine arts, computer art, photography, theater, dance, and music.

In addition to Ramapo's ranking in *U.S. News*, the College recently was recognized by two national publications. An article in the February 2007 issue of *Kiplinger's* magazine named Ramapo College among the top 100 public colleges and universities. Ramapo College also is one of 222 select colleges and universities profiled by The Princeton Review in the 2008 edition of *The Best Northeastern Colleges*.

Dr. Peter Philip Mercer became the College's fourth president on July 1, 2005. The College is governed by a Board of Trustees who are appointed by the Governor of the State. The Reverend Dr. Vernon C. Walton is the chairman of the board.

RAMAPO COLLEGE
ALMA MATER

Lyrics by: *Michael Alasá* Music by: *David Welch*

RAMAPO, WE SING TO YOU. RAMAPO WITH PRIDE
PRAISE-FILLED VOICES RAISED ON HIGH FILL YOUR MOUNTAIN SIDES
IN THE TIME WE'VE SPENT TOGETHER WE HAVE COME TO LEARN TO HAVE
DIGNITY, A MIND THAT'S FREE AND CELEBRATE HUMANITY
RAMAPO, AS YEARS GO BY. RAMAPO, WITH LOVE
EVEN WHEN YOU'RE FAR AWAY, FOR EVER WE'LL BE ONE,

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OPENING CONVOCATION

ISHMAEL BEAH

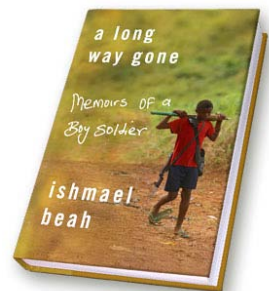
Best-selling Author of

*A Long Way Gone:
Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*



Wednesday,
September 19, 2007
1 p.m.

Arena,
Bill Bradley Sports and
Recreation Center





ISHMAEL BEAH

Ishmael Beah was born in Sierra Leone on November 23, 1980. When he was eleven, Ishmael’s life, along with the lives of millions of other Sierra Leoneans, was derailed by the outbreak of a brutal civil war. After his parents and two brothers were killed, Ishmael was recruited to fight as a child soldier. He was thirteen. He fought for over two years before he was removed from the army by UNICEF and placed in a rehabilitation home in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. After completing rehabilitation in late 1996, Ishmael won a competition to attend a conference at the United Nations to talk about the devastating effects of war on children in his country. It was there that he met his new mother, Laura Simms, a professional storyteller who lives in New York. Ishmael returned to Sierra Leone and continued speaking about his experiences to help bring international attention to the issue of child soldiering and war affected children.

In 1998 Ishmael came to live with his American family in New York City. He completed high school at the United Nations International School, and subsequently went on to Oberlin College in Ohio. Throughout his high school and undergraduate education, Ishmael continued his advocacy work to bring attention to the plight of child soldiers and children affected by war around the world, speaking on numerous occasions on behalf of Unicef, Human Rights Watch, United Nations Secretary General’s Office for Children and Armed Conflict, and at the United Nations General Assembly; serving on a UN panel with Secretary General Kofi Annan; and discussing the issue with dignitaries such as Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton. He is a member of the Human Rights Watch Children’s Rights Division Committee.

In *A Long Way Gone*, Beah, now twenty-six years old, tells a riveting story. At the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he had been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts. Eventually released by the army and sent to a UNICEF rehabilitation center, he struggled to regain his humanity and to reenter the world of civilians, who viewed him with fear and suspicion. This is, at last, a story of redemption and hope.

Washington Post

“Everyone in the world should read this book. Not just because it contains an amazing story, or because it’s our moral, bleeding-heart duty, or because it’s clearly written. We should read it to learn about the world and about what it means to be human.”

Time Magazine

“A breathtaking and unselfpitying account of how a gentle spirit survives a childhood from which all innocence has suddenly been sucked out. It’s a truly riveting memoir.”

People Magazine

“Deeply moving, even uplifting...Beah’s story, with its clear-eyed reporting and literate particularity—whether he’s dancing to rap, eating a coconut or running toward the burning village where his family is trapped—demands to be read.” (*Critic’s Choice*, Four stars)

OPENING CONVOCATION

September 19, 2007

President’s Welcome Dr. Peter P. Mercer
President

National Anthem. Adam Posluszny
Class of ‘09
Director, Mack Brandon
Professor of Music

Greetings and Introduction Dr. Beth Barnett
Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs

“An Afternoon with Ishmael Beah” Best-selling Author of *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Child Soldier*

Question/Answer Session

Gift Presentation Steven Bloom
Student Trustee

Alma Mater Amanda Sweatlock
Class of ‘08
Director, Prof. Brandon

Closing Remarks Dr. Mercer

Book signing and reception to follow.

Please remain seated for the duration of the program.

First-Year Seminar Summer Reading Program

The Ramapo College summer reading experience serves to engage new students in a common academic activity that accentuates critical reading, discussion, and writing skills. The summer reading is a common thread among all thirty-four courses in the first-year seminar program.

The summer reading experience is not restricted to first-year students. The entire Ramapo community is encouraged to participate by reading the selected book and discussing it with one another so that the campus might share a common academic experience.

Every year, a book is chosen by faculty, students, and staff as the Summer Reading to be read by all incoming freshmen and a significant number of other members of the Ramapo Community. The summer reading for the class of 2011 is *A Long Way Gone: A Story of Redemption and Hope* by Ishmael Beah.

A Long Way Gone: A Story of Redemption and Hope, is about a boy, who, at the age of twelve, fled attacking rebels and wandered around his home country, Sierra Leone rendered unrecognizable by the violence of a brutal civil war. At thirteen, he was recruited to fight as a child soldier, and forced to commit truly terrible acts. After two years, Ishmael Beah was released by the army and, sent to a rehabilitation center. Beah struggled to regain his humanity and to reenter the world of civilians. Today, he travels the world and talks about the devastating effects of war on children.

All first-year students will use the summer reading as an initial common subject that they will discuss and debate, armed with research, information and Beah’s personal account provided in *A Long Way Gone*, accentuated by their own personal experiences and viewpoints.