



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Mind Your Mothers: Life and Death of Asia's Great Rivers      **Name:** Kimron C. Thomas

**Other Team Members:**

**Program:** NYC - Asia Program

**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001      **Location Visited:** India, China

**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** Becoming an FFT fellow seemed like the chance of a lifetime, but how to make it meaningful for my students and school as well as myself? In search of answers, I dug through my school's performance data and found a worrisome trend: the same students that were making strong progress in English and History were, time and again, performing far lower than would be expected on their Science Regents exams.

In order to leverage the strength of the History and English departments to increase student learning in Science, I began to design a curriculum that would unite English, Science, and Global History around a singular historical narrative and a common set of reading and thinking strategies.

Finding the curricular connections was easy, but what could ignite my passions enough to carry me through the challenging work to come? As I brain stormed, it became clear that I was headed back to Asia where, two years prior, I had sailed the Yangtze, a magnificent river that once thundered but now runs silent and filthy through its ancient gorges and monstrous dam.

I flew east to explore the life and cultures of two of the world's oldest civilizations and fastest-growing economies built along the Mother Rivers. In India, I traveled the Ganges River, reveled in the nightly worship of the holy Ganga, and met with the Sankat Mochan Foundation, which works to cleanse its septic, sacred waters. In China, I visited ancient grottoes and explored the agricultural and industrial histories of the Yellow River from the ancient water-powered Silk Road city of Lanzhou to Beijing.

**Career Impact:** After three long, hard years in the classroom, I credit my time as an FFT fellow for helping to make my fourth year the most personally rewarding and professionally successful of my career.

Re-invigorated by the act of "doing history" for the first time, I have transformed both what I teach and how I teach it. Having experimented with cross-curricular instruction, I now see the connections between subjects easily, and work with my colleagues to make them clear to our students on a daily basis. Seeking to replicate my own growth in India and China, I now make authentic historical simulation a regular part of my students' classroom experience.

**Classroom/Community Impact:** Given the scope of the FFT project I had envisioned, its realization would depend on the development of a number of new skills and the navigation of a variety of new professional experiences.

Along the way, I conducted original research into the legacy of imperialism in India, the tensions between faith and science along the Ganges, and the creative and destructive histories of China's Yellow River.

Once back, my peers and I built a cross-curricular unit of study that incorporates my own experiences with Harvard's Visible Thinking routines, Writing Across the Curriculum principles, and Harvey and Goudvis' reading comprehension strategies.

**Open Response:** Having implemented our curricular unit, my colleagues and I are working now to revise and finalize the draft unit and lesson plans, which will be made available for review and use at <http://mindyourmothers.com>.

Meanwhile, I am presenting this fellowship work to my school community. In ongoing seminar series, I have shared my experiences as a fellow with my colleagues, and together we are designing and writing their proposals for next summer.

With this collaborative project as a model, our school is creating structures to better communicate and integrate the work of our department and grade teams.

**Quote:** Re-invigorated by the act of “doing history” for the first time, I have transformed both what I teach and how I teach it.

Photos:



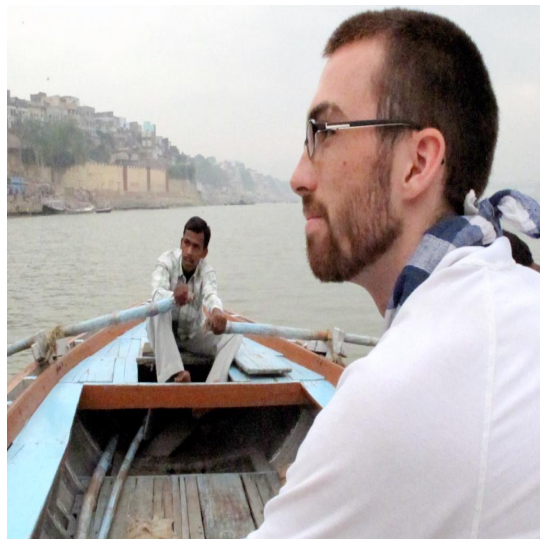
Me at the magnificent Taj Mahal



In Agra, open sewage ditches line the streets, threatening local water systems.



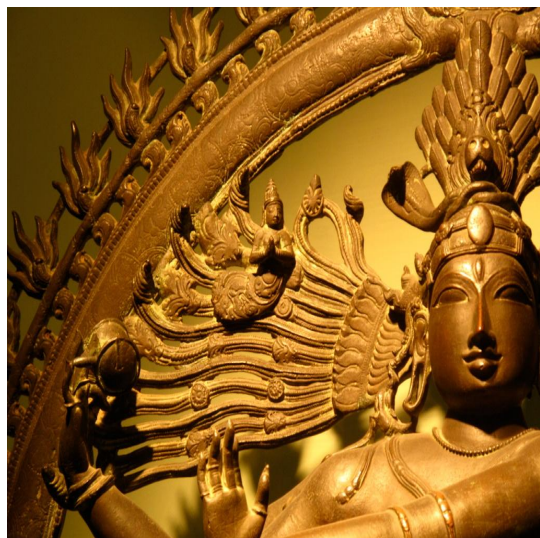
Worshippers fill Varanasi's waterfront nightly to honor the holy mother Ganga.



An early morning boat ride proves the best way to experience the mighty Ganges.



Laundry and worship occur side-by-side on the ghats of Varanasi.



The goddess Ganga descends from heaven via Shiva's hair in this ancient statue.





Even the mighty Yellow River can't sate industrial China's appetite for water.



These giant waterwheels have been symbols of Lanzhou for over 400 years.