

FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2 (JULY 2022)



IN THIS ISSUE:

LATVIA • COVID-19 • UKRAINE • EDUCATION • PUBLIC HEALTH • URBAN DEVELOPMENT • SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS • SPAIN • CLIMATE CHANGE • FULBRIGHT-NEHRU • INDIA • AHMEDABAD • HUMAN RIGHTS • MICROBIOLOGY • BACTERIA • RUTGERS UNIVERSITY • FULBRIGHT VISITING SCHOLAR PROGRAM • BIOTECHNOLOGY • AUSTRALIA • DEFENSE • SCIENCE • TECHNOLOGY • INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION • MALAYSIA • DANCE • COLLABORATION • CHOREOGRAPHY • UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS • PUBLIC SECTOR • ETHICS • INTERNATIONALIZATION • MYANMAR • GRASSROOTS GOVERNANCE • DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Fulbright Chronicles is a new, independent, open access, peer-reviewed journal with contributions by and for the global Fulbright community. The journal is overseen by a global Editorial Board.

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The journal provides a welcoming space for Fulbrighters to share their work and reflections on global issues with a broad audience. It features thoughtful, accessible articles that reflect on how Fulbright experiences have contributed to knowledge and cross-cultural understanding, or that comment on contemporary issues that affect the Fulbright program or cultural and educational exchange more broadly.

The *Fulbright Chronicles* can only succeed with the engagement of the Fulbright community. The editors strongly encourage Fulbrighters to contribute articles or commentaries on topics related to your research and practice and the critical issues of our times. We also welcome letters commenting on this issue's contents or other matters of interest to the Fulbright community. Author Guidelines are available on our website (www.fulbright-chronicles.com).

The journal is an independent publication, overseen by the Editorial Board members under the guidance of the Co-Editors. Rob Ellis serves as Publishing Editor. For further information, visit the *Fulbright Chronicles* site (www.fulbright-chronicles.com).

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FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES IS FOR EVERYONE

BRUCE B SVARE AND KEVIN F F QUIGLEY

The *Fulbright Chronicles* like the Fulbright Program itself aims to be global, reflecting the remarkable diversity of the Fulbright participants and experiences everywhere.

We are very pleased with the response to the inaugural issue (April 2022) that helped generate the compelling submissions needed for a quarterly journal about the enduring impact of the Fulbright Program and topics of concerns to our Fulbright community.

To fulfill our ambition to be the journal for Fulbrighters everywhere, we need your help in encouraging contributions. In 2019-20, the last year before the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 60% of Fulbrighters were from foreign countries and 40% from the US. Our editorial team wants to represent the 400,000 Fulbright Alumni from all 150 countries of the world where the program has a presence.

We also welcome contributions from every type of Fulbright program from faculty scholars to distinguished chairs and administrators, to those involved in the sciences, performing and fine arts, as well as student researchers and high school teachers.

One of the essential strengths of the Fulbright program is its remarkable diversity and the important voices that contribute to our pages must reflect this. To that end, the articles and commentaries in this issue reflect the variety and inclusiveness we are seeking.

This second issue of the *Chronicles* begins with a timely piece by Courtney Queen and Robert Osgood. As Fulbright scholars to Latvia during the Russian invasion of nearby Ukraine, they discuss strategies for continuing to grow professionally as Fulbright Scholars even in the face of massive institutional restrictions and societal change. There is also an important piece by Fulbright Distinguished Chair William Schonberg about his work to assist the Australian Department of Defense in safeguarding Australia's science and technology national interests. This issue also includes reflections by Habiba Atta on her Fulbright postdoctoral stay at Rutgers University where she learned biochemistry techniques allowing her to aid her home country of Nigeria in cleaning up oil spillage and preventing contamination.

Also in this issue, Jonathan Hollander, choreographer and artistic director of the Battery Dance in New York City, tells us about his Fulbright activities in India and Malaysia where his collaborations aided him in teaching dance forms in those countries as well as bringing new ethnic dance forms to the

One of the essential strengths of the Fulbright program is its diversity and the voices that contribute to our pages must reflect this.

United States. Susan Opp writes enthusiastically about her Fulbright teaching and research experiences in Mauritius where she was able to improve her pedagogical practices and simultaneously find new outlets for scholarship in the area of global public administration. Brenda Millan, a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Spain, reflects on her experiences in this country and how they have prompted her to promote sustainability and climate action at the international and local level. Scott Roulier and Rahul Jindal, Fulbrighters to India during the COVID-19 pandemic, examine how they processed the social impact of an explosion of new urban infrastructure and political tensions during the pandemic. And in the final article, David Crumpton, a Fulbrighter to Myanmar transplanted to Thailand to complete his work owing to the recent *military coup*, writes persuasively about a grassroots governance model for post war Myanmar in collaboration with expat Burmese students at Chiang Mai University.

This issue also marks another important milestone in the evolution of *Fulbright Chronicles*. In our goal to represent the scholarship of Fulbrighters, we are starting a book review section under the aegis of seasoned editor and Fulbright Alumna Erika J. Waters. You can read about this new section in the current issue and contribute your own book or serve as a reviewer. This is yet another way to contribute to a professional journal that represents the good work and scholarly activity that Fulbrighters engage in every day.

Please keep your articles and commentaries coming. Also, don't forget about the letters section of *Fulbright Chronicles* where you can discuss a variety of topics in short form (500 words or less). In addition, in the letters section we encourage brief comments on an issue of importance to the Fulbright community and/or a recently published article or commentary. This can include both supportive and critical thoughts.

Enjoy what you read in the second issue. We hope that you will feel inspired to submit something about your own Fulbright scholarship and experiences, as well as suggesting to other Fulbrighters that they should contribute to the *Chronicles*. With your help, we can better reflect the remarkable diversity and enduring impact of the Fulbright program. Thank you!

CONNECTING THROUGH TRAUMA: GROWING PROFESSIONALLY AS FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS THROUGH HUMANITARIAN CRISES

COURTNEY QUEEN AND ROBERT OSGOOD



ABSTRACT

As Fulbright Scholars in Latvia during the multiple humanitarian crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, we discuss the impact of these events on our Fulbright activities and scholarship. Based on our experiences, we offer a few strategies on how to continue to grow professionally as Fulbright Scholars in the face of massive institutional restructuring and societal change.

Keywords: Latvia • COVID-19 • Ukraine • education • public health



INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Fulbright Program is to build mutual understanding between the United States and the partner country as well as advance knowledge across communities and improve lives around the world. Being Fulbright Scholars through a pandemic and the outbreak of war, we very soon came to realize that this privilege also encompassed a wide range of responsibilities and opportunities. Far beyond what initially seemed mostly academic in nature became far deeper and emotional than a routine assignment. This article explores different aspects of serving through crises, and how the role of global and social crises can, in fact, yield possibilities for growth, understanding, and constructive contributions beyond those directly prescribed by the grant.

As Fulbright Scholars in Latvia, with Riga Stradiņš University, Institute of Public Health, and the University of Latvia, School of Education, respectively, we were delayed a full award-year due to COVID-19. Through this period, we had become accustomed to uncertainty in the delivery of our educational programming, changes in curricula, pedagogy and mode of delivery, and the practice of making rapid changes to assessment practices. With the effects

of COVID-19 on higher education and society still lingering, our time in Latvia was already greatly influenced by yet another event global in nature and especially profound in Latvia which was the invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

We arrived in January of 2022 with our families as Russia was already making disturbing moves and statements regarding its relationship with Ukraine and its military build-up near Ukraine's borders. On February 24, 2022, six weeks after arriving in Riga, much of the attention of the world, and especially Latvia, was directed toward the invasion of the sovereign country of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Although the Russian military units and personnel were not mobilized along Latvia's border with Russia, having lost independence through a similar invasion, and subsequent occupation, Latvia and the Baltic countries were understandably very deeply troubled by the invasion.

As academics, we remain committed to our disciplines of Public Health and Education, so despite the distractions, every thread of our time with our collaborating institutions continued to remain focused towards accomplishing our project objectives. As Research and Teaching Scholars, the goals of our projects included traditional course lectures, and working with graduate students to meet their academic and professional goals. We shared a common thread with our appointments which was to support equity frameworks and inclusive pedagogical practices, but through these changing social conditions, our guiding questions became: what roles can we, and should we, play in working amid multiple humanitarian crises, our fundamental questions became: how do we navigate these changing realities so that we can achieve the goals and objectives for our grant activities, and more importantly, how can we support the work and the lives of those with whom we collaborate?

GROWING PROFESSIONALLY AS FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS THROUGH CRISIS

Having designed our Fulbright projects prior to COVID-19 and during a time which now seems like a very distant memory, we couldn't even begin to imagine how the activities of our daily lives would completely be restructured by infectious disease and a pandemic, and it wasn't even imaginable that war would break out in Europe. Reflecting on our hopes and dreams of advancing scholarship and making a difference in the world as Fulbright Scholars was starting to look very different in the face of multiple humanitarian crises. Many of the activities from our original proposals had to be renegotiated such as having to offer courses virtually, instead of in person. But, also, these events affected how we would connect and relate to our colleagues as well. All of a sudden, we were meeting colleagues virtually, instead of in person, and community outreach was largely on hold as Latvia was still on strict lockdown measures when we arrived. Then, with the invasion, the tone and mood

of the virtual encounters was solemn and there was always a strong need to take time to acknowledge the events that were transpiring, pay respect to the victims, recount the mobilization activities for displaced families locally, and then just take the time to reflect how emotionally distracted everyone is because of fear, loss and the cultural and historical traumas because of their own relationship with invasion and war. The world is profoundly different than when we started this journey, but it is not lost, just very different. Given this, we would like to offer a few tips based on our experiences of how to continue to grow professionally as Fulbright Scholars in the face of massive institutional restructuring and societal change.

First, be flexible and empathetic. In a strictly grant-related sense, we had to alter our original intentions and objectives of the grant to better suit the realities on the ground. We adjusted pedagogies, lectures and teaching activities to be as effective as possible in a virtual environment. This was all accomplished across cultures and languages, and in very different settings than in the traditional classroom setting of our home countries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the classrooms from which we came, we were already challenged with how to create and keep the energy of a traditional, in-person classroom as we all transitioned to a virtual environment. In many ways, we were able to rely on the same tools of engagement that we were already forced to adopt. Strategies and tactics found in leadership theory helped us engage others even across cultures, languages, and in a virtual environment. These include soliciting personal stories and observations from students about their real-life experiences, and including inviting others to speak to our students and share theirs as well. Additional strategies helpful for encouraging engagement in virtual environments, and across cultures, are using metaphors and presenting contrasting ideas. Moreover, and especially in crisis, it is important to reflect the sentiment of the group, and truly seek to connect and show empathy with the experiences of others during this time.

Second, be inclusive. These traumas allowed us, as educators, to lend our experience and perspective to facilitating discussion of issues and situations that arise as a result of these conditions. In addition to borrowing from leadership theory, borrowing from the original tenants of inclusive education is imperative. This exercise rests in the topic of how to actively create inclusive educational environments which advocate and support such inclusivity for students. Originally found in the literature regarding students with disabilities, then as a consequence of COVID-19, principles of creating inclusive educational environments is valuable for many other groups of students as well. Studies show that students who have contracted COVID-19 have experienced extra layers of exclusion due to physical isolation and health-based stigmatization of those who are feared may spread the disease. Additionally, displaced families and children from Ukraine face barriers created by exposure to violence, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and challenges related to language, stigma, and a sense of belonging.

Our students, many of whom are professional practicing teachers and practitioners of public health, have sought advice and counsel on how to ease the inclusion of students and families in regular classrooms, or in public health programming such as with COVID-19. It was not uncommon to discuss strategies for creating a welcoming learning environment, offering information regarding the truth of the conditions of students and children in transition, then suggesting appropriate teaching methods and technologies that can lead to greater acceptance and inclusivity. Many times, this involved discussions of strategies for creating personal agency for both teachers and students and examples of creating inclusivity in the classroom by becoming co-learners with students. While much of the focus of the literature has shifted from disabilities and abilities to inclusivity, it has been exciting to see how these tools can be exercised for these practical and real-world circumstances. Drawing on the original body of thought regarding inclusive education has proven invaluable for navigating these new and emergent challenges in the classroom.

Third, be safe. It has become readily apparent that the importance of paying attention to local realities and staying informed through the Embassy, government websites, and both local and international news organizations, is not just casual lip service. As the COVID-19 crisis has slowly abated and the trauma of the invasion of Ukraine has grown exponentially, it is truly imperative that any Fulbright Scholar needs to become a knowledgeable and aware citizen of the locality, the nation, and the world. One must have knowledge of all the contextual factors which contributes to our making and the histories and lived experiences of our hosts. Not just for personal safety and awareness is this important; so too it is imperative for being able to connect with the experiences of our local colleagues.

These unexpected circumstances have stretched our capacities as humans and as educators far beyond our expectations, and even imaginations, but not beyond our capacities as Fulbright Scholars to fully engage in all the privileges and opportunities afforded to us by the generosities and kindness of all those we have met along the way.

CONCLUSION

As the war moved into the fourth month, and the pandemic into the third year, it has become clear that the role of a Fulbright Scholar is diplomatic and humanistic, as well as academic. Despite the massive shifts with our institutions, and in the world, excellence as a Fulbrighter remained paramount. Throughout the experience of societal change and monumental tragedy, and together with our colleagues and communities, we continued to forge new collaborations and generate innovative ideas toward our common goals. Above all, excellence as a Fulbrighter was made more rich, more intimate, and more transformative through these events. While success and achievement are well noted in orientations, it expresses itself vividly when confronted with real traumas and crises among your students, colleagues, friends, neighbours,

and members of the wider community. These unexpected circumstances have stretched our capacities as humans and as educators far beyond our expectations, and even imaginations, but not beyond our capacities as Fulbright Scholars to fully engage in all the privileges and opportunities afforded to us by the generousities and kindness of all those we have met along the way. We assume these qualities are in many ways responsible for us being here; but to put them to use in unexpected yet vitally important fashion can be as rewarding as it is challenging.

NOTES

1. Queen, Courtney. 2022. Applying charismatic leadership to support learner engagement in virtual environments: Teaching and learning in a time of crisis. *Pedagogy in Health Promotion*.
2. Osgood, Robert L. *The History of Inclusion in the United States*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2005.



Figure 1: Courtney Queen and Robert Osgood, Fulbright Scholars to Latvia, in front of the Freedom Monument honouring soldiers killed during the Latvian War of Independence (1918-1920), and commonly regarded the most important symbol of freedom, independence and sovereignty of Latvia.

BIOGRAPHY

Courtney Queen, Ph.D. is a Fulbright Scholar at Riga Stradiņš University with the Institute of Public Health. Dr. Queen is an Assistant Professor of Public Health in the Julia Jones Matthews School of Population and Public Health at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. She resided in Riga, Latvia as a Fulbright Scholar, with her 7-year-old daughter, during the multiple humanitarian crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and the invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. She can be reached at courtney.m.queen@ttuhsc.edu

Robert Osgood, Ph.D. is a retired Professor of Education. He has served as a faculty member at universities in California, New York, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin as well as in Japan and Malaysia. For his Fulbright grant he has been working with the Faculty of Pedagogy, Psychology and Art at the University of Latvia in Riga since January 2022. He can be reached at rosgood28@yahoo.com

MY FULBRIGHT AWARD IN MADRID CHANGED THE WAY I VIEWED SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

BRENDA GARCIA MILLAN

ABSTRACT

My Fulbright award was an English Teaching Assistant (ETA) fellowship in Madrid, Spain, where I coordinated a Global Classrooms (Model UN) project. Through its easy access to public transit and walkable neighborhoods, Madrid changed how I viewed sustainable urban development. This article reflects on those experiences and discusses how I continue promoting sustainability and climate action at the international and local level.

Keywords: Urban development • sustainable development goals • Spain • climate change • education



In 2018, I received a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) fellowship to the *Comunidad de Madrid*. After some challenging years as a University of Oregon graduate student in rainy Eugene, learning about my imminent move to sunny Spain felt like every sacrifice had built up to that one moment. However, when I learned that I would teach at a high school located in Alcorcón—a municipality located on the outskirts of Spain’s capital—I was concerned about how I would travel to work every day. Once I arrived in Spain that fall, it became clear that living in the big city and commuting to work would be a completely different experience than what most Americans are accustomed to.

On my second day in Madrid, I was fortunate to find a *piso* (apartment) across the street from Atocha. Atocha is Madrid’s largest railway station, serving ten *cercanías* (commuter trains) lines, high-speed trains, Madrid’s metro line 1, more than 20 local bus routes, and many more intercity buses. During my first visit to Atocha I was struck by the fact that the station led in every direction, almost as if Atocha were at the center of the world—or at least the center of my new world.

For those who may not know, Atocha was at the center of the world’s attention during the terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004, when Al-Qaeda bombed commuter trains. Today, Atocha stands as one of the safest and most sustainable transit stations in Europe. Just across its marvelous doors, one finds a stunning 43,056 square foot tropical garden composed of 7,000 plants from 360 species from the Americas, Asia, and Australia. Walking by Atocha’s tropical garden became part of my daily train commute to Alcorcón, where I taught at *Instituto Los Castillos*.

BRINGING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TO THE CLASSROOM

As a teacher's assistant, I coordinated a Global Classrooms (Model United Nations) project in which I introduced students to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This project was the first of its kind at *Los Castillos*. As the first Fulbrighter to be hosted by my school, I helped establish the foundations of the program, setting the stage for future Fulbright grantees.

By teaching about the SDGs to young students, I sparked curiosity among students about global efforts to achieve a more sustainable, just, and greener world. To discuss solutions to achieve the SDGs, I prepared lesson plans on difficult topics related to the inequities that impact the quality of life of people worldwide, particularly women, who are most vulnerable to poverty. Despite their age, I found Spanish students incredibly open-minded and mature. I frequently led talks concerning gendered violence, racism, and discrimination against migrants—all of which would make many American adults uncomfortable—but my pupils were always active and engaged in these discussions.

By the end of the Global Classrooms project, my students produced research papers on the Sustainable Development Goal number five, Gender Equality, in which they investigated how different countries address the major challenges faced by women. They also participated in a United Nations Human Rights Council mock conference with hundreds of other students from the *Comunidad de Madrid*. This experience influenced my way of thinking about the role of youth as agents of change who can mobilize to promote the SDGs and improve the lives of people and the future of our planet.

After my return to the United States, I was invited by a fellow Fulbrighter from Spain to join the Global Schools Program Research Team. Global Schools is an initiative of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network supporting United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Global Action Program on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). As a project officer, I develop tools and resources to support education systems and educators globally in implementing the SDGs in the classroom, continuing the work I did as a Fulbrighter in Madrid. I've also helped prepare reports about the localization of the SDGs in national curricula in developing countries and a guide for educators on best practices for ESD implementation. As of 2021, the Global Schools Program has expanded from 937 to 1,270 schools in 89 countries and territories worldwide.

This (Fulbright) experience influenced my way of thinking about the role of youth as agents of change who can mobilize to promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and improve the lives of people and the future of our planet.

ADVANCING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS IN SAN DIEGO

Today, the long-term impact of my time as a Fulbright scholar in Madrid is reflected in my work as a Research and Policy Analyst at a San Diego-based non-profit called Climate Action Campaign (CAC). CAC's primary goal is to advance policies and programs to help San Diego and Orange County stop the climate crisis by reducing carbon emissions. We do our work through an equity lens reflected in our five policy priorities: 100% clean energy, bikeable, walkable neighborhoods, all-electric homes, world-class transit, and climate resiliency.

As I discussed earlier, during my time in Madrid, I was a frequent public transit user who had an easy and accessible commute to work. Living in Madrid made me realize that the transportation sector is key to sustainable urban development. For example, between 2018 and 2019, I witnessed the establishment of measures such as *Madrid Central*, which was a historic step toward a car-free city center to clear air pollution and improve pedestrian safety.

Since joining CAC in 2021, I have devoted my efforts to combating San Diego's car dependency, which contributes to heavy air pollution and GHG emissions that exacerbate climate change. One major accomplishment I have had during this time has been publishing a research report outlining alternatives to sprawl development, which is the outward expansion of low-density residential and commercial development, promoting car-dependent communities.

For decades, sprawl has proven to be unsustainable and damaging in San Diego and throughout California. Urban sprawl leads to increased energy use, pollution, traffic congestion, and the destruction of the natural environment. My research reports address these issues and includes key recommendations for cities in San Diego County on how to build sustainable communities with walkable neighborhoods and public transit near housing and jobs.

In addition to land use and transportation policy, my work centers on advancing sustainable climate solutions through local initiatives, including advocating for the development of zero carbon Climate Action Plans (CAPs). CAPs are frameworks used by local governments to set ambitious carbon emission reduction targets. This year, I co-authored my organization's 5th Edition Climate Action Plan Report Card to offer an assessment of San Diego's region's climate policy planning and implementation. To create this report, I evaluated thirteen regional CAPs along with cities' annual monitoring reports. As a result of this evaluation, I provided cities with best practices in climate equity, clean energy, food systems, transportation and land use, and the green economy.

LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION AND LOOKING FORWARD

As I continue to grow in my career as a researcher and policy analyst, I hope to advance solutions that lead to a zero carbon San Diego. Cities are at the frontline of the climate crisis, and we need coordinated local action to build safe and sustainable communities. As a member of the Fulbright Association, I look forward to establishing partnerships with fellow Fulbrighters who share similar interests and experiences. Currently, my goal is to join the Board of Directors of the recently established Fulbright Spain Interest Group. In the future, I hope to return to Spain to research sustainable development policies and initiatives to build more sustainable and equitable cities.

NOTES

1. For more details on the Global Schools Program see the Global Schools Annual Report 2021 from <https://www.globalschoolsprogram.org/annualreport>
2. A detailed analysis of sprawl development can be found in Climate Action Campaign's report *Solving Sprawl: Building Housing for a Sustainable and Equitable San Diego* <https://www.climateactioncampaign.org/sprawlreport>
3. To learn more about the impact and status of Climate Action Plans in the San Diego region see Climate Action Campaign's *5th Edition CAP Report Card* <https://www.climateactioncampaign.org/report-card>



Brenda Garcia Millan (in burgundy dress) at Prado Museum with King Felipe VI of Spain and fellow Fulbright scholars.

BIOGRAPHY

Brenda Garcia Millan is a Research and Policy Analyst at Climate Action Campaign, a public policy nonprofit organization based in San Diego, California. In addition to her work at Climate Action Campaign, Brenda serves as a Project Officer at Global Schools Program, an initiative by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth. In 2018, she was a Fulbright Fellow in Madrid, Spain. Brenda has a Masters' degree in Global Studies from University of Oregon. She can be reached at brenda.garciamillan@gmail.com

JUST UNDER THE WIRE: FULBRIGHT CAMARADERIE IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

SCOTT M. ROULIER AND RAHUL M. JINDAL



ABSTRACT

Only a handful of Fulbright Scholars made it to India in January 2022, before the spread of the Omicron variant necessitated yet another postponement. Two of those happened to be based in Ahmedabad. This commentary describes how an informal support structure emerged and also explores how that relationship informed how each scholar—one, a first-time visitor, and the other, an expatriate—processed the social impact of an explosion of new urban infrastructure and political tensions.

Keywords: Fulbright-Nehru • India • Ahmedabad • COVID-19 • human rights



FIRST TIME IMMERSION IN INDIA: SCOTT

When I arrived in Delhi on January 5th, I opened my email and discovered that, because of the explosive outbreak of COVID-19-omicron cases, Fulbright was, once again, hitting the pause button on U.S. grantee arrivals to India. I was jet lagged and, to be perfectly honest, incredibly nervous that a representative of United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) was going to offer me a single cup of chai in the airport then load me onto the next flight back home. Since I was part of the 2020-21 cohort, I hope I can be forgiven for being thus triggered, given that my grant had already been postponed several times. Fortunately, having reached Indian soil, I was allowed to remain in-country. In all, I believe there were seven of us who slipped-in under the wire.

Serendipitously for me, one of those individuals was Rahul Jindal, a transplant surgeon and social entrepreneur from Maryland, who was set to embark on his second Fulbright in my host city, Ahmedabad. Rahul, it turns out, was no stranger to Ahmedabad; he grew up there, and his father had been Dean of its top medical school. As per standard Fulbright policy, I had an official contact at my host university. Nevertheless, as Omicron precipitated a move back to remote learning—and as it became increasingly clear that COVID-fatigue and other complications were impacting my host university's plans for my stay—Rahul became, in that first month and beyond, a significant mentor and guide.

Shortly after arriving in Ahmedabad, Rahul and I ate dinner on the famous rooftop restaurant, Agashiye. Normally, the place would have been packed; however, in the grip of Omicron uncertainty, we shared the space with only a handful of other customers. Still, as we watched the evening traffic stream

across the Nehru Bridge and worshippers file out of the Sidi Saiyyad mosque across the street, I felt my body, still tense from a complicated journey, finally relax. I also consumed my first “thali,” multiple delicacies served in small bowls on one platter. Little did I know that the thali would become an apt cultural metaphor for the inextricable, all-on-the-same-plate, mix of exhilaration and exasperation that one encounters in India.

Our conversations covered the gamut, from cricket to “Modicare,” from communal violence to caste. We had each formed different ideas about the latter two topics, which engendered lively yet respectful debate. My interest in spatial justice drew my attention to the construction of innumerable high-rises and a plethora of large-scale infrastructure projects, all of which had displaced tens of thousands of slum-dwellers. Without dismissing these legitimate concerns, Rahul shared his own life experiences, which counterbalanced some of my observations. Though not an apologist for the current administration in New Delhi nor an uncritical advocate for its neo-liberal economic reforms, his reflections on growing up in a moribund economic climate, wherein many industries were state-owned and entrepreneurship was often suffocated by over-regulation, helped me to better comprehend the dimension of civic pride that also accompanied these development projects.

Moreover, the postcolonial theory that figured prominently in my work in India tended to view civil society institutions with suspicion (for their purported extension of Western bourgeois values and forms of social control). Though I sympathized with some of these concerns, I was convinced that negative assessments of this sector were exaggerated. Getting to see Rahul’s project (see description below), which involved collaboration among a number of educational institutions and NGOs, helped to sharpen my own critique.

In the absence of Rahul’s friendship, my adjustment to India, especially given the challenges of COVID-19, would have been infinitely more difficult. Still, it was the intellectual exchange—and, of course, the basic lessons on how to get from place to place in an autorickshaw—for which I am most grateful.

AN EXPAT’S ENDURING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SUBCONTINENT: RAHUL

Trying to get a PCR test in Maryland before my departure to India in early January, turned out to be as difficult as securing Hamilton tickets in its opening weeks on Broadway. In stark contrast, when Scott and I arrived in India, a robust testing regime was in place. Rapid antigen testing was provided by the local municipal corporation free of charge at tents across the city. Of course, the COVID-19-related death toll in India continues to be a matter of

contention between the Modi government and the World Health Organization. Hopefully, the gap in the two entities' numbers will narrow, since having accurate data is crucial to assessing the effectiveness of the government's vaccination campaigns.

Though a surgeon by profession, I have a keen interest in my home country's history and culture and closely monitor current events. Since Scott is a political scientist, it is not surprising that our discussions often turned to political topics. Given the ruling party's "Hindutva" or Hindu nationalist politics—and the widely publicized tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities—we spent a lot of time talking about some of the flash points in recent decades, including the destruction of the Bari Masjid (mosque) in Ayodhya in 1992 and the riots in our host city, Ahmedabad, in 2002. I tried to address these events as even-handedly as possible and, along with Scott, lamented their occurrence.

Nevertheless, as several studies have demonstrated, religious tolerance and a commitment to the basic principles of liberal democracy have deep roots in modern Indian political culture. When we traveled around the city together, I tried to point out the intermingling of various communities, a social reality much more common than the headline-grabbing conflicts.

Moreover, during our stay in India a controversy erupted over young women wearing the hijab or Muslim head covering in public schools in the state of Karnataka. As a member of the Human Rights Commission in the US State of Maryland, I take my responsibility to root out racial and religious discrimination seriously, but I cautioned that one needed to be careful not to subsume all such policy conflicts under the banner of Hindutva politics, at least not exclusively. The Indian State of Karnataka's High Court's decision against the wearing of the hijab in certain schools, seemed, in my estimation, to align with India's tradition of secularism. Additionally, the common uniform avoids overt displays of wealth, a socio-economic counterweight to freedom of religion concerns.

Finally, I have become more interested in global health, with a focus on task-shifting as a means to fulfil the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. My current Fulbright project at the Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar, aims to address unmet surgical needs in marginal communities. The project commenced with a hands-on training session conducted for a cadre of community health workers, with help from Ahmedabad-based Non-Governmental Organizations—Saath and Sadvichar Parivar. The former vetted trainees from local slum communities and the latter provided the venue for the training. The prestige of the Fulbright award and my social networks enabled extensive collaboration, as Scott noted, among a diverse range of institutions and actors.

Overall, our experience is an important reminder of how the Fulbright program continues to connect scholars and, thereby, increases both personal and community resilience in the age of COVID-19.

Overall, our experience is an important reminder of how the Fulbright program continues to connect scholars and, thereby, increases both personal and community resilience in the age of COVID-19.

NOTES

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2. See, for instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007) and Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
3. A high court in India’s Karnataka state has ruled that the hijab is not “essential” to Islam in a landmark case that could have implications across the country. Imran Qureshi, “Hijab ban: Karnataka high court upholds government order on headscarves”, *BBC News*, March 15, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-60300009>
4. Task shifting allows tasks to be shifted from highly qualified healthcare workers (HCW) to those with less training and qualifications. A good example is our work in rural India - the SEVAK Project (<https://sevakproject.org/>) to produce HCWs for underserved villages with a short curriculum. SEVAK training emphasizes lifestyle intervention and health screening for diabetes, hypertension, obesity, immunization, and chronic diseases. Rahul M Jindal et al., “SEVAK Project in India and Guyana Modeled After the Independent Duty Corpsman of the U.S. Navy”. *Mil Med* 2015; 180: 1205-6. <https://doi.org/10.7205/MILMED-D-15-00340>

BIOGRAPHY

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Rahul M. Jindal, MD, Ph.D., MBA, Professor of Surgery and Global Health, Uniformed Services University & Adjunct, Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar, India. He also serves as Commissioner, Office of Human Rights, Montgomery County, Maryland. He was a Fulbright-Nehru Distinguished Chair (2016) and Senior Scholar (2022), both in India. He can be reached at jindalr@msn.com

MY FULBRIGHT RESEARCH AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY: A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

HABIBA I. ATTA

ABSTRACT

I was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar in 2021 at Rutgers University in New Jersey. My research was aimed at isolating hydrocarbon-degrading bacteria from contaminated soil samples. I was able to isolate bacterial species that have the ability to degrade a variety of aromatic hydrocarbons and sequence some of them. This research contributes to the existing database on hydrocarbon-degrading bacteria. It also will influence policy changes in the field of environmental microbiology.

Keywords: Microbiology • bacteria • Rutgers University • Fulbright Visiting Scholar program • biotechnology



REFOCUSING APPLICATION OF MICROBIAL SCIENCES IN THE REAL WORLD

Through my years practicing microbiology in research and also in teaching, there has always been that yearning to apply my specific area of research in the field. Applying for the Fulbright scholar program was top on my to-do list following the completion of my Ph.D. research in 2016. I had senior colleagues that were Fulbright Scholars and the impact of the fellowship on their career was evident. Three qualities that stood out in both of them were: an eagerness to mentor younger colleagues in research, ability to discern relevant research topics and exceptionally good skills in networking. This further strengthened my decision to also be a part of such an obviously laudable program. On conducting some research online, I realized the Fulbright program was even more prestigious than I imagined. I applied for the Fulbright Visiting Scholar program for the first time in the year 2018/2019. I got to the interview stage but wasn't selected at the final phase. Undeterred, I applied in the following year, 2019/2020 and this time I made the final cut. I was ecstatic with joy because deep inside me I knew it would mark an important turning point in my career as an academic. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I couldn't make the trip to the United States in 2020, and prepared to arrive in the US in January 2021.

SETTLING DOWN IN THE GARDEN STATE

I made my trip to the US in late January in the midst of the pandemic arriving in the cold winter at Newark International airport in the state of New Jersey. My host professor was frequently in touch with me and after I had secured accommodation close to the university campus (Cook Campus), I met briefly with Dr. Gerben J. Zylstra for the first time. He introduced me to the doctoral candidates in his lab, and also took me on a short tour of the facilities. Due to the pandemic, and the COVID protocol, there were a set of lab rules to ensure social distancing was maintained in our time in the laboratory. I was shown to the portion of the lab where I would be conducting my research and also given a copy of the lab key and shown to a personal office I would use during my time there. I was able to secure a flash card from the Information Technology (IT) department in the university so that I could gain access to the building and its facilities. Then, work started in earnest.

LABORATORY STUDIES

My host faculty was Dr. Gerben J. Zylstra, a Distinguished Professor and Director of the Graduate Biology program, Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences. He has been nothing short of amazing all through our correspondence before my arrival in the US. I had read and cited his papers during my doctoral research years ago, so he was my first point of call when I needed a host professor. We share similar research interests in the field of biodegradation of harmful compounds, and I feel so lucky to have been hosted by him. The focus of my research at Rutgers University was on studying bacteria in soil with the potential to break down hydrocarbons commonly found in certain industrial activities (petroleum industry, coal processing plants).

As an environmental microbiologist, I am interested in harnessing the potential of microorganisms for the benefit of other living beings and the environment. Essentially, the ability of bacteria isolated from petroleum-contaminated soils in oil-producing regions in Nigeria were assessed in the laboratory for their ability to utilize six different hydrocarbons for their growth requirements. Following isolation of the bacteria on microbiological growth media in the laboratory, the prominent and fast-growing colonies were preserved for further studies. Subsequently, they were tested in several rounds of experiments for their ability to use selected hydrocarbons for their metabolic needs. These compounds include the mono-aromatic hydrocarbons (m-xylene, o-xylene, and ethylbenzene) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (naphthalene, dibenzofuran, and biphenyl).

The bacteria were identified using tools that enabled us to determine their lineage based on the information in their DNA. This was achieved by amplifying the 16S ribosomal ribonucleic acid (16S rRNA) gene by polymerase chain reaction (PCR), and then subsequently determining their nucleotide sequence by Sanger sequencing. Subsequently their identity (the genus and

species based on taxonomy) was inferred based on the closest matches obtained when comparing their nucleotide sequences with those on the database of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI). The entire genome sequence of selected species of bacteria was determined by Next Generation Sequencing (NGS). These species were selected based on their high efficacy in degrading the hydrocarbons. This method reveals the complete profile of the bacteria with regards to their metabolic capabilities and other functions. Interestingly, we discovered that some of the bacteria had the ability to breakdown two or three of the compounds. The implication of this is the potential of these microorganisms to be used in field applications to clean up similar compounds polluting aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Also worthy of mention is the fact that many field studies in Nigeria do not focus on identifying these hydrocarbon-degrading bacteria using next generation sequencing. Hence certain vital information about these organisms could be overlooked. A big factor impeding this aspect of research in Nigeria is the paucity of funds. Thus, researchers in this area often rely on external funding bodies or collaborations with peers in foreign countries.

Another important outcome of our research was the discovery of species that are not frequently encountered in these studies. It was interesting to note that even though my principal investigator (PI) and I had similar research interests, there were some differences in the way we conducted certain routine laboratory procedures. Even though this may not have any bearing on the overall outcome of the experiments, it certainly accounts for differences in the turnaround time of an experiment. Nevertheless, there were several fundamental procedures which were likely to have significant impact in the final result especially in the stage of isolating the bacteria from the soil sample. The procedure used in my host lab involved some intricate details as opposed to the relatively simpler technique I am accustomed to in my home institution. This is probably because the relevant equipment to achieve this level of detail is not available in my institution.

Of particular interest to me is the documentation that surrounds handling the hydrocarbons in the laboratory, especially before their disposal at the end of the experiments. I found this to be important since many institutions in my home country lack the training on how to handle, store and dispose of these chemicals. Perhaps policies guiding this procedure need to be created and relevant training provided for academics, technologists and students handling these chemicals. The Biosafety/Blood pathogens and Laboratory Safety refresher courses are an annual requirement for those of us working in the laboratory at the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology at Rutgers University. In 2021, we took the course online due to the pandemic. These courses certainly provided enlightenment on the importance of proper handling and disposal of laboratory chemicals and reagents after use. This is a key to ensuring that harmful compounds do not find their way into the environment.

The application of bacteria and fungi in removing harmful pollutants from contaminated terrestrial and aquatic environments is not a new technology. However, it has not been fully explored in my home country of Nigeria. In the petroleum industry, soils contaminated with hydrocarbons in the upstream sector usually undergo remediation using physical and chemical methods, and recently with the use of certain plants. However, remediation and reclamation of hydrocarbon-contaminated lands using microorganisms (bioremediation) is not a common practice except in laboratory experiments. The result of widespread petroleum spillage in oil producing regions in Nigeria has negatively affected the local community as their health and source of livelihood

The outcome of my (Fulbright) research has led to isolation of bacteria which I plan to apply in oil spillage sites in Nigeria as a green solution and sustainable means of restoring the environment.

become compromised. It is thus necessary to fully understand the nature of bacteria dwelling in contaminated soils and determine their ability to utilize these hydrocarbons, in order to possibly apply them in cleaning up large areas of oil spillage. Bioremediation offers a more reliable means of restoring polluted environments due to its cost effectiveness and eco-friendly mode of action which ensures little or no adverse effect to the environment. The outcome of my research has led to isolation of bacteria which

I plan to apply in oil spillage sites in Nigeria as a green solution and sustainable means of restoring the environment.

My stay at Rutgers exposed me to new technologies which I had not been able to utilize in the past, in particular, next generation sequencing techniques. It's a technology that we are utilizing to analyze the genes enabling the proficient bacteria I isolated in the lab to degrade hydrocarbons. This provides the basis for comparisons with other bacterial species with similar functions. A substantial aspect of this technique is conducted as a "dry lab" procedure thus, relying on relevant data analysis and computational tools. This will eventually lead to the publication of articles in high quality journals with wide readership thus improving the web visibility of my profile and that of my home institution. I was also able to learn how to utilize conventional methods in new ways (using multiple laboratory culture media to increase the chances of isolating bacteria) to enhance the study of the activities of beneficial bacteria.

My Fulbright Scholar experience at Rutgers University has enabled me to teach my students, especially my graduate students, new methods I have learned and how to apply them during laboratory analyses. This is already in place, and currently one of my Ph.D. candidates is using these methods to achieve faster results in the laboratory.

75 IS A DOUBLE BLESSING!

A wonderful coincidence with the 75th anniversary of the Fulbright program is that my mother also turned 75 in 2021. I couldn't help but see this as a special twist of fate. My mother holds a special place in my heart because I lost my dad at a very young age and my mother was responsible for single handedly raising my siblings and me. She taught me the value of hard work, and never being afraid to have big dreams. My mother turned 75 on February 13, 2021; and even though I couldn't celebrate with her on her big day because I was far away in the US, I was glad that I was literally living the life she groomed for me. I am deeply honored to have experienced my Fulbright fellowship on a special year in my mother's life.

ENRICHING EXPERIENCE

By the end of my fellowship stay, I loved getting to know and understand the intricacies of the State of New Jersey. I realized that practically every state in the United States is unique in its own way, particularly in terms of certain traffic regulations and the academic calendar for grade school. It was interesting to note the rich ethnic diversity in the city of New Brunswick where I lived for most of my fellowship. I met people from virtually all parts of the world: Egypt, Iraq, India, Mexico, Macedonia and so many other countries. It was interesting meeting other Fulbrighters through the online events hosted by One to World, and some of them eventually became close friends with whom I still maintain contact even after returning to Nigeria. Even though we had limited in-person events, the virtual events made a strong social impact in fostering friendships. It was an absolute thrill getting to learn about other cultures especially in terms of cuisine and recreational activities, as well as sharing aspects of our research and academic careers. I met people that were so helpful and warm to a stranger with an African accent. I have found new ways of elevating the learning experience for my students, and also how to apply new methods in my research particularly with my graduate students. My network is bigger because I had the rare opportunity of meeting many notable personalities in academia and the industry through the virtual meetings I attended, and there is the possibility of fostering collaborations in the near future.

A particularly helpful feature within the Fulbright community is the creation of smaller circles within the larger network based on location of the scholars (those within proximal distance). In my case, I was able to affiliate and socialize with other New Jersey and New York Fulbright Scholars. At one such meeting, I met a Fulbrighter named Servena. She was the recipient of a Fulbright Teacher's award in the preceding year, and happened to reside in a nearby city in New Jersey. We became close friends and she invited me to spend the last few weeks of my fellowship with her which I happily accepted. She took me on a tour of New York city and also on a visit to the beach. And

because she was a teacher in New York city, I became involved in a project with her students that allowed me to share part of my culture in relation to Nigerian cuisine, dance and music, traditional clothing. It was a fun experience but also a learning moment for me as well, as I also got to learn about the culture and traditions of other invited speakers from other parts of the world. She made my last few weeks in the States very pleasant and exciting and I will be forever grateful to her.

There is a possibility for future collaborations with Dr. Zylstra as we have discussed the likelihood of having my graduate students conduct their research in his laboratory if the need arises. We frequently discussed how graduate programs are run in the US and in Nigeria, and there are some similarities as well as marked differences. This has prompted me to conclude that effective policies in our institutions are just as important as the research conducted in the laboratories. My life is richer as a scientist and as a citizen of the world, thanks to the Fulbright Program.

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The author shares a moment with her host professor at Rutgers University, Dr. Gerben Zylstra.

BIOGRAPHY

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NOTES FROM DOWN UNDER: SOME THOUGHTS FROM A FULBRIGHT DISTINGUISHED CHAIR IN AUSTRALIA

WILLIAM P. SCHONBERG

ABSTRACT

As part of the Australian Department of Defense, the Defense Science and Technology Group provides science and technology support to safeguard Australia and its national interests. In this paper, I hope to share not only my thoughts on those experiences and how they affected my professional career, but also to impart some insights regarding the overall experience for the benefit of future Fulbright Scholars. This paper is an extended version of the reflection article appearing on the Fulbright Australia website at <https://www.fulbright.org.au/news-and-events/2020/02/>

Keywords: Australia • defense • science • technology • international collaboration



ON TO AUSTRALIA

When I first learned of my acceptance into the Fulbright program as a Distinguished Chair I was thrilled! Amazed! Astounded even! And in Australia! Wow! Of course, eventually the reality of all that was required to make The Move set in. However, throughout those hectic few months leading up to the beginning of my program with the Defense and Science Group (DST) in Melbourne, Australia, there was always a pretty steady level of excitement simmering below the surface. Not only will I have the opportunity to work on an important technical project, but also, as a Distinguished Chair, there will be the opportunity to travel in Australia and visit with colleagues and meet with members of the general public to discuss my research project as well as other contemporary scientific and technical issues.

As part of the Australian Department of Defense, the DST provides science and technology support to safeguard Australia and its national interests. It is Australia's second largest government-funded science organization, with establishments in all Australian states and the Capital Territory. Members of DST collaborate with science and technology colleagues around the world to strengthen each other's defense technology base and also work closely with Australian industry and universities to enhance that country's defense capability.

Beginning in 2013, DST's organizational structure consisted of three Corporate Divisions (the Science Strategy and Program Division, the Science Partnerships and Engagement Division, and the Research Services Division) and seven Research Divisions (Maritime Division, Land Division, Aerospace Division, Joint and Operations Analysis Division, National Security and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Division, Cyber and Electronic Warfare Division, and Weapons and Combat Systems Division). In that regard, DST is quite different from U.S. defense research organizations. In the U.S. there is, in effect, a DST for every military branch. The Office of Naval Research, for example, is focused on maritime research; the Army Research Lab and the Air Force Office of Scientific Research on matters that their names imply. Having all experts in all defense-related areas under one umbrella organization can work to create any number of synergistic opportunities – maritime researchers can easily call on the help of land domain scientists, who are either just one or two floors away, or sometimes just down the hallway.

And so, having learned in February 2018 of my appointment as a Distinguished Chair at DST, my wife and I spent the next ten months preparing for what we were sure was going to be the adventure of a lifetime. Needless to say, we were not disappointed.

THE RESEARCH COMPONENT

My original research proposal targeted the development of mathematical models to more accurately predict how structures and other systems (e.g. armored vehicles, medical supply trucks, etc.) can withstand a physical attack. Following my arrival in Melbourne, the focus of my work soon zeroed in on attacks against land vehicles by small caliber arms fire. The results of my work will now allow DST researchers to better predict the response of different kinds of armored vehicles to various types of physical attack.

My time at DST also allowed me to branch out and use my expertise in spacecraft protective system design from the previous 30 years of my professional career in a different area, which was a lot of fun. It allowed me to flex my intellectual muscles a bit! The question in my mind was, "Could the research people did in years past be applied to Land Division's problems of interest?" My thinking was that it would be great to be able to use equations and engineering models of structural impact that already exist, without having to spend a lot of time and money developing an entirely new response predictor model.

The answer I eventually arrived at was, YES! ... well, maybe ... well, maybe at least to some extent. Taking established, sometimes decades-old scientific models of how certain types of structures respond to impact, I had to figure out which of them were applicable to land vehicle configurations today. In the end, after just a little bit of tweaking, I was able to find a handful of extant models whose predictions matched pretty well with the test data. I

thought that was pretty cool because many of the materials we use now didn't exist when these models were developed. As it turned out, these models are sufficiently robust so that with a just a few simple modifications we can use them today. To me, that's exciting!

Because you cannot test all materials and all projectiles under all configurations and all impact conditions, the ultimate goal of my work was to hopefully find some models that would be general enough so that they could be continually updated and made applicable to the widest possible set of materials, configurations, impact conditions, etc. The defense scientists and engineers at DST would then hopefully be able to take those models and insert them into their vulnerability and lethality assessments to render those assessments more general and comprehensive.

THE PUBLIC OUTREACH COMPONENT

As a Fulbright Distinguished Chair, I was expected to actively engage my host institutions, as well as other institutions and organizations, promote mutual understanding and share knowledge. As I visited different universities and organizations around Australia, I was surprised and pleased to find that just about all of the Australian people I met continue to hold the U.S. in high regard with respect to its leadership in science, technology, and engineering. It also happened that it was the 50th anniversary of the moon landing while I was in Australia. I was really impressed by the number and variety of commemorative events taking place! Many people told me how proud they were that Australia was a partner with the United States, and was so instrumental in helping to realize that achievement.

Over the six-month-appointment as Distinguished Chair, I was able to give 11 technical and general audience seminars at 10 different locations, including a Black Box Lecture at DST Group, Special Fulbright Lectures at the University of Tasmania, the Australian Maritime College, the Australian Youth Aerospace Association, the RAAF Air Power Development Center, an Open House lecture at Mt. Stromlo Observatory, and seminars at the Swinburne Institute of Technology, Monash University, the University of Melbourne, and University of New South Wales, Canberra.

I also had the opportunity to participate in a live, on-air interview at ABC Radio Hobart in advance of my seminar in Hobart the following day – that was a first for me! I was invited to join a podcast on space debris that was hosted by faculty from Monash University, attended the 7th Annual Australian Space Forum in Adelaide where I met with representatives from the newly formed Australian Space Agency, the CSIRO, and the ANU Space Environments Research Center (SERC). As a result of these outreach efforts,

I significantly expanded my network of professional colleagues in the aerospace industry. I am pleased to report that since my tenure with DST I have stayed in contact with many of them, exploring new ways of collaborating on projects of mutual interest.

GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

All in all, my Fulbright experience left me with a renewed excitement for international collaboration to solve problems of mutual interest. More so than ever before, because of technology, the lives of everyone on this planet are incredibly interconnected. Sometimes this is a good thing – for example, knowledge can be shared almost instantaneously across the globe. If you have a question about something, chances are, someone else has either had the same question or may even have an answer out there for you!

Unfortunately, sometimes this global interconnectivity can lead to unintended consequences – and we end up creating incredibly complex, global problems for ourselves and for our children who, more likely than not, will be the ones having to solve them. These interconnected, global problems cannot be solved by a single group of people or a single country on its own. To be successful at solving these problems, we need to be able to work across borders, across oceans, and across cultures. And, as we work with each other to solve these problems (or perhaps to prevent them from occurring in the first place?), we must remain cognizant that despite these challenges to cooperation, working with cultural differences is vital in developing useful problem solutions. To put it simply, people from different walks of life see problems from different points of view – interdisciplinary teamwork is key to developing innovative solutions to technical problems!

LESSONS LEARNED

My experiences as a Fulbright Distinguished Chair showed me that we all, whether engineers, scientists, faculty, or the citizenry in general, have similar concerns, problems, needs, wants and desires for ourselves, our families, our careers, and our lives. There's a lot of commonality among us.

My experiences as a Fulbright Distinguished Chair showed me that we all, whether engineers, scientists, faculty, or the citizenry in general, have similar concerns, problems, needs, wants and desires for ourselves, our families, our careers, and our lives. There's a lot of commonality among us. We all want to feel secure, warm, fed, and at least content in what we do and where we do it. I think that many of the solutions to the challenges faced by people around the world revolve around realizing that this commonality exists among the people of different nations, especially those that

don't talk so much to each other. I have been lucky enough to experience an incredibly warm and healthy U.S.-Australia relationship, and I can't help but feel it'd be nice if relationships between other countries were just as good.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who worked so hard to get me to Australia, and to everyone at DST and the Australia Fulbright Commission for making me feel so at home.. It was great to be able to walk right into an environment that was as welcoming and friendly as DST and as Melbourne. The only real difficulty I encountered was the delay in getting the right security clearance, which would have increased my ease of travel within the facility. Not having a clearance in place upon my arrival led to the awkward situation of having to be escorted in and out of my building when I arrived, when I wanted to go to the cantina, and when it was time to go home. This was certainly an imposition on my host, even though he was very accommodating and gracious about the whole thing.

I am not sure if it is possible to do so, but in the advertisement for the DST-located Distinguished Chair in Advanced Science and Technology, those topical areas where work would be performed in a facility that would require a clearance of some sort should be identified, and a statement regarding the need for a clearance should be included. This would alert potential U.S. applicants of the need to either already have in place a security clearance that could be transferred to Australia, or to be in a position where a transferable clearance is about to be confirmed. There is simply not enough time to file for and receive a security clearance between notification of acceptance from Fulbright and the start of a Fulbright appointment. To not inform a recipient who does not have a clearance that having one would make the visit logistics work a lot smoother is fair to neither to the scholar nor to the host (who now has to scramble to make alternative plans to provide for the scholar's access).

CONTINUING COLLABORATIONS

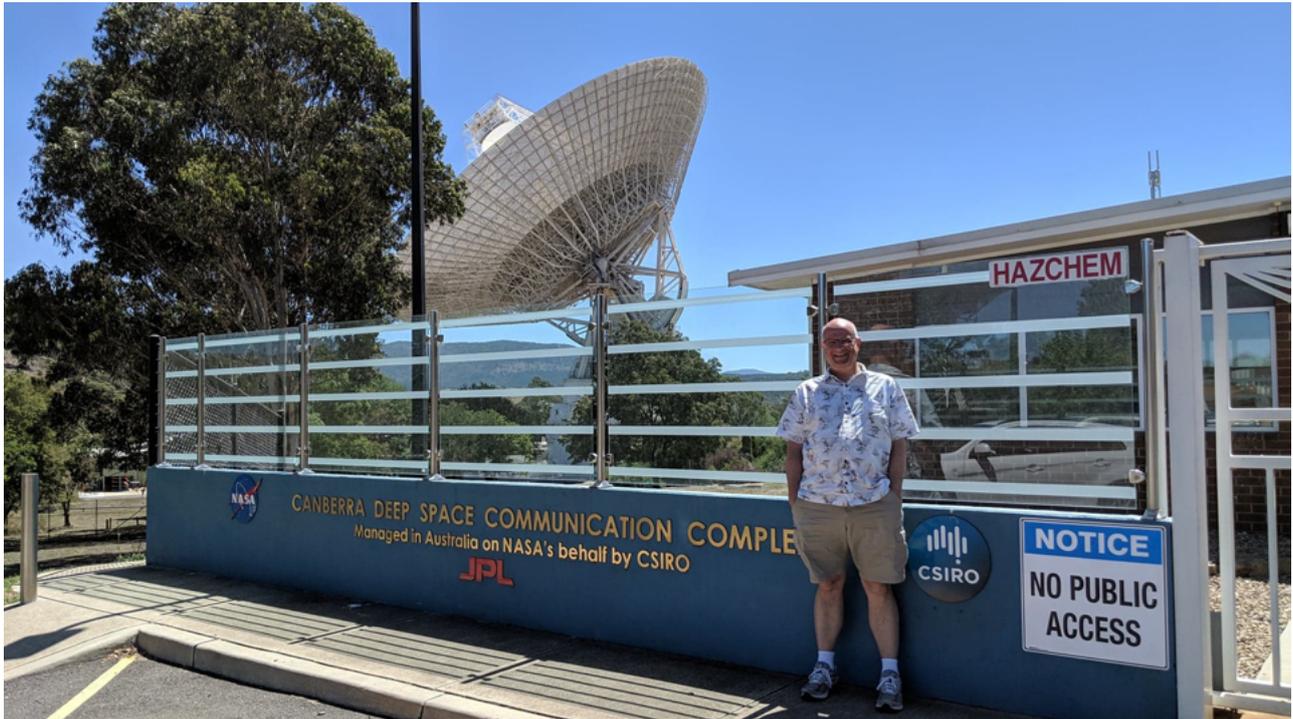
Approximately three months into my tenure at DST Group, I was invited to contribute a public lecture and a book chapter to a volume on space debris edited by a Deputy Director in the Air and Space Power Centre (known then as Air Power Development Centre) of the Australian Air Force. Additionally, I was invited to conduct a private tour and deliver a public lecture at the Mount Stromlo Observatory, the headquarters of the Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics at the Australian National University. Thus began one of several continuing collaborations with Australia., leading to several seminars via Zoom, including the Space Law Council - Australia & New Zealand (known then as Australia & New Zealand Space Law Interest Group), and the Sydney Section of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. This continuing collaboration led to a presentation on space debris as part of the Space Law Conference sponsored by the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand in the Fall of 2021.

Following completion of my Distinguished Chair appointment, I was also lucky enough to be engaged in a follow-on project with my DST host. This project continued to improve the models that I developed, ultimately finding ways to adjust the models so that their correlation with experimental data was even higher. This work resulted in three refereed journal publications and numerous seminars and presentations to interested parties in Australia as well as back home.

Although my Fulbright host left DST for a university appointment, he and I are now planning another project together. This new project will involve machine learning applications to the problem of developing improved protection systems for earth-orbiting spacecraft against the hazards posed by the meteoroid and space debris environment. I am enjoying my continuing collaborations with my new colleagues and friends from Australia and New Zealand, and I am looking forward to further collaborative efforts that will undoubtedly arise as a result of my time and activities Down Under!

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Dr. Schonberg at the NASA/CSIRO Deep Space Network Dish Just Outside Canberra, Australia.

BIOGRAPHY

William Schonberg is a civil engineering professor at Missouri University of Science & Technology in Rolla, Missouri. The Fulbright Distinguished Chair of Advanced Defense Science & Technology at the DST Group was his first Fulbright award. He can be contacted at wschon@mst.edu

DANCING TO THE FULBRIGHT BEAT

JONATHAN HOLLANDER

ABSTRACT

During Fulbright tenures in India (1992) and Malaysia (2011), collaborations led to the creation of choreography, bilateral exchanges and the launching of an arts council. The Fulbright awards served as catalysts for the flourishing of relationships that have continued to grow and produce outcomes in the art, social and educational spheres. The “foreign” became “familiar”, the acts of giving and receiving became intermixed, and personal and professional growth were nurtured in unexpected ways.

Keywords: India • Malaysia • dance • collaboration • choreography



MAGICAL KEYS

I think of Fulbright awards as keys to the world, and not just any keys. Fulbright keys have magical powers. With them I opened doors to relationships, collaborations, interactions, learnings and creative productions that have continued to proliferate and blossom over the past 30 years. And yet it was all so totally unexpected. Back in 1991, I was into the 15th year of my life as a choreographer and artistic director of Battery Dance in New York. My work was being performed in the New York City area and on tour in various parts of the U.S. However, my creative and intellectual interactions were almost entirely with other Americans based in New York City. Although I was hoping to expand my horizons internationally, I had no idea how to do so.

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That is until my friend and colleague Janaki Patrik, the brilliant American-born Kathak dancer and a Fulbrighter herself, encouraged me to apply for a Fulbright, saying, “they’re looking for artists.”

Up until that point, I had thought of Fulbright as a prestigious award given exclusively to academicians with blue-ribbon credentials as scholars, writers and thinkers with lots of letters after their names. How could I, a dance artist, college drop-out, presume to be qualified for such an honor?

When my appointment for a 3-month position in India actually came through – attaching me to the National Centre for Performing Arts in Mumbai and Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, with side engagements at two of India’s leading dance institutions and a 4-city tour of the State of Andhra Pradesh, I was beyond elated. As a choreographer, I was supercharged by what I imagined lay ahead: the opportunity to meet peers, senior

artists and students in the rich world of Indian dance. India's dance culture is beyond compare, and I hoped there would be fertile ground for sharing in the post-Colonial period of the early 1990's. But no research nor preparation could have allowed me to predict the many ways in which I would be able to give and receive during the Fulbright experience.

SURPRISES IN AHMEDABAD – DANCE AND DESIGN

During my stay in Ahmedabad, in between teaching master classes and organizing my own company's performances, there was ample time to watch rehearsals and performances by the great Indian classical dancers based there and to compare notes about our lives as artists. Amidst all of the hectic activity, I fell into an unexpected and quite remarkable opportunity. The National Institute of Design (NID) was nearing the end of term and graduation of its Masters of Fine Arts students in the textile and garment design program. Instead of a runway model show, the visionary head of the department asked me if I would choreograph dances to showcase the graduates' collections.

Always hungry to take on new challenges, I jumped at the chance to upend the usual model of costumes being designed FOR dance, and this time design dances FOR the costumes. I didn't need to be paid since my stipend from Fulbright covered my living expenses and NID offered one of their guest houses on campus. My only condition was that I wanted to work with trained dancers and this resulted in the bringing together of two leading arts and educational institutions – Darpana Academy of the Arts, with its prestige as an incubator for great dance, and NID itself. Though located on the same road, they had failed to collaborate for a decade or more due to some long-forgotten tiff. The designer whose work stood out, and whose collections became the focus of my choreographic interventions, was Sandhya Raman. That was in 1992. As of today, Sandhya is the leading costume designer for dance in all of India and even among the Indian diaspora in the U.S. and Europe. For me, a small work entitled "Moonbeam" was inspired by Sandhya's gossamer thin white starched cotton Mughal robes with geometric window-pane pattern of interwoven gold threads. Famed Indian dancer Mallika Sarabhai and her then dance partner Sasidharan Nair were the couple for whom I created this duet and it had a life back home in the U.S. and on tour to Turkey, Azerbaijan, and many other U.S. and foreign cities when successive pairs of dancers learned it years later. A true *mélange* of Indian and American influences born of my Fulbright experience, a dance piece that served as a metaphor for the entire experience.

THE ARTS AND SOCIAL IMPACT IN MALAYSIA

Nearly 20 years later, in 2011, having been selected for the Fulbright Specialist roster, new doors opened for me in Malaysia, a country I had visited with Battery Dance six years earlier. Creative thinking on the part of Nicholas Papp, the American Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, allowed for a solution to the many requests we were fielding from our Malaysian hosts at Akademi Seni Budaya Dan Warisan Kebangsaan (ASWARA) and Sutra Dance Theatre. I didn't see how I could achieve successful outcomes on my own until Nick proposed combining my Fulbright award with an Embassy grant, enabling my two-part Specialist program to gain from the presence of two of my senior teaching artists from New York in Part I; and by the entire Battery Dance Company in Part II. (Specialist programs allow for projects to span more than one visit as mine did.) What transpired was memorable, served as a model for future programs with refugee integration and adaptation, and has been sustained through on-going relationships with students with whom we worked and who have now come into their own as leading professionals in the field of dance internationally.

In Part I of the assignment, Sean Scantlebury, Robin Cantrell and I conducted workshops with 50 dance majors at ASWARA, the leading dance conservatory program in Kuala Lumpur and ranked among the top in the region. We utilized the methodology that had become Battery Dance's signature arts education project at home and abroad: *Dancing to Connect*. In this 20-hour intensive workshop series, participants are given the tools to choreograph their own dance, breaking the imitative mold so frequently utilized by American dance companies when they go abroad (including, I should admit, Battery Dance in prior times).

The students proved to be so creative and motivated that at the end of a week of training, we had two large and compelling pieces of choreography. We combined these works with two duets by Robin and Sean, and a few traditional Malay, Chinese and Indian dance items by the ASWARA dancers and voila. As a result, we had an evening-length program that was performed before a packed audience including U.S. Ambassador Paul Jones and his family and Malaysian dignitaries.

The underpinnings were set up to allow for a truly impactful integration of the high level ASWARA students with much younger United Nations High Commission Refugees from Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Having experienced and excelled in the creative modality of *Dancing to Connect*, a group of hand-picked students from ASWARA shadowed and partnered with our dancers in working with the refugee youth, encouraging them to explore physicality and expression through dance. This was a radical experience for the participants who had been living in tight quarters with their families in the refugee camps outside of KL with little opportunity to move freely, to participate in joyful experimentation and to socialize with Malaysians.

Phase II of my Fulbright Specialist assignment coupled with the Embassy grant took place 6 months later and allowed the relationships with ASWARA students to develop even further. As our 5 dancer/teaching artists fanned out to different parts of Malaysia (Penang, Kota Kinabalu, Kuang), each was accompanied by an ASWARA graduate, who not only teamed up in the pedagogical activities but also performed solo or in a duet with their Battery Dance trainer. Putting my Fulbright lens to work, examining and evaluating all of this activity, what I see is a merging, melding, shedding of any concept of “the other”, and instead the breeding of a deep trust, curiosity and enrichment across what had started out to be very different nations, religions, backgrounds and life and career expectations.

In yet another aspect of the collaboration, Ramli Ibrahim, Malaysia’s most celebrated dancer and founder of Sutra Dance Theatre, and I created choreography for each other’s dancers and the two companies presented four joint performances at the leading arts center in KL, one of which was a private show for the local Fulbright Association and others invited by the Embassy.

BILATERAL EXCHANGES AND CHANGING ATTITUDES

Successful international exchange programs like the Fulbright are meant to be catalysts for ongoing interactions and engagements, a kind of starter fluid. My Fulbright experiences in India and Malaysia have gone way beyond any notion of U.S. cultural imports. I have a ready-made opportunity to present international dancers in New York through the Battery Dance Festival each summer, where relationships built during my Fulbright overseas experiences yielded performances by Indian and Malaysian dancers for the enjoyment of American audiences.

In 1993, the year after my Fulbright in India, I organized cross-country U.S. tours by two of India’s most illustrious dance companies that had never been seen by American audiences. It was a reckless endeavor by a neophyte presenter and took all the passion, stamina and grit I could muster. I remember bucking what would now be considered unacceptably racist attitudes on the part of mainstream media in cities as large as Houston and LA, where I heard statements like, “We don’t cover ethnic dance. Our critics can’t write about forms with which they are unfamiliar and the audiences those performances attract don’t read our papers anyway.” Nevertheless, high visibility presenters such as Lincoln Center (New York City), Annenberg Center (Philadelphia), and colleges and universities across the country showcased these dazzling companies and audiences responded in kind.

I followed up by organizing two more tours by Indian dance companies before realizing that the effort was causing personal and institutional burn-out. I approached the Indian Consul General in New York, Harsh Bhasin, and asked him to consider inviting the diasporic community to attend a panel discussion by non-profit arts experts that might lead to the creation of an

Indian Arts Council. He agreed and the idea took hold. The Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC) was launched with Ms. Aroon Shivadasani as its founding director and over the next 20 years, Aroon built a host of annual programs including film, theater, music, literary arts, visual arts and dance festivals. I stayed on the Board to support Aroon and served for the entire duration of her tenure.

Battery Dance and IAAC teamed up each year in presenting the Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance and literally dozens of India's best dancers have appeared on our stage each August, with generous reviews and photos adorning the *New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *TimeOut NY* and *The New Yorker*. Gone were those bad old days when critics ignored Indian dance.

DRUMBEATS, SONGS AND POETRY

The year after my Fulbright, I felt it was time to dig into Indian music and to see whether my aesthetic and the talents of my dancers could find an authentic response. I contacted the late Bengali-American tabla player Badal Roy, and we improvised in the studio in the hot summer weeks in New York. Badal sat on the studio floor, playing drum rhythms and speaking in metered patterns called the "bols" and I experimented with movement evocations. I summoned up memories of my Fulbright time in Ahmedabad, where the Sabarmati River wound its way beyond the embankment on which Natarani Amphitheater perched. Donkeys traversed the riverbed that was dried up except for a small rivulet towards the middle where washerwomen beat saris against stones after dunking them in the reddish water.

Badal's beats and my vivid memories served as rich springboards for what became, "Seen by a River", choreography that toured India in 1994. While on tour, we had dinner in the home of Badal's friends in Kolkata and were treated to a recital by the host's daughter. The performance of what turned out to be songs by Nobel Poet Laureate Rabindranath Tagore inspired my *Songs of Tagore*, performed across Europe, U.S., Sri Lanka and India during the 50th Anniversary of Indian Independence in 1997. I turned to Sandhya Raman once again who created the eye-catching costumes and to Indo-American painter Anil Revri to create the sets. I left one space in the choreography to be filled by an Indian classical dancer for which Mallika Sarabhai initially took up the part. Kolkata native musicians Samir and Sanghamitra Chatterjee, who had moved to Queens, NY, just in time to serve as consultants, were critical to the development of the production and accompanied us at Asia Society in New York, and on tour.

Fresh from the 17-city Indian tour of *Songs of Tagore*, I decided to collaborate with a Chennai-based producer on *PURUSH: Expressions of Man*, a production designed to highlight outstanding male dancers across the genres of Indian classical dance whose gifts were being overlooked. Historically, Indian dance was the purview of male dancers who even portrayed female parts

in drag, but current audiences much preferred female dancers. We created a medley of performances by 10 male dancers and musicians; and I contributed *Testimony of the Nataraj*, a duet for contemporary dancers, Kevin Predmore and John Freeman, with an original musical score by Badal Roy and the jazz guitarist Ken Wessel. The premiere performances took place at Lincoln Center in New York and Music Academy in Chennai, before a triumphant cross-country U.S. tour.

UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES ON STAGE AND CYBERSPACE

Following the extensive interactions with Malaysian dancers at ASWARA, two of our program participants achieved MFA degrees at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and one, Md. Fairul Zahid, was selected to present his choreography at the Battery Dance Festival in 2016. As the first Malaysian to receive a faculty appointment at the LaSalle College of the Arts in Singapore, Fairul will bring a team of dancers to the Battery Dance Festival in August, 2022

During the pandemic, Battery Dance pivoted to the virtual world, recording over 1,000 classes, performances and discussions on topics related to dance and cultural diplomacy. This platform brought attention to many talented dance-makers from India and Malaysia with performances, interviews and classes broadcast on Battery Dance TV to audiences across 206 countries with 1.5 million digital views.

The magical Fulbright keys continue to open new doors, as Bethany Mitchell, the next generation of Battery Dance Fulbrighters, carried out a vibrant Fulbright Specialist program in Mazatlán, Mexico in the Spring of 2022.

NOTES

1. For information on Battery Dance, visit www.batterydance.org
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3. Documentary Film Trailer “Moving Stories” -- <https://bit.ly/389uPiE>
(Complete film is available on Amazon Prime and Vimeo on Demand)



Jonathan with Battery Dancers Robin Cantrell & Sean Scantlebury and US Ambassador Paul Jones, Fulbright Specialist Program Phase I, 2011, Kuala Lumpur

BIOGRAPHY

Jonathan Hollander was a Fulbright Scholar to India (1992) and Fulbright Specialist to Malaysia (2011). He founded Battery Dance in 1976 and has choreographed over 70 works presented in 70 countries. He has established arts education residencies in New York City public schools and created the Battery Dance Festival, NYC's longest-running public dance festival. His awards include the Federal Cross of Merit from the President of Germany and Choreography Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has been a keynote speaker for the U.S. Department of State, Aspen Institute, Foreign Policy Association and The Selma Jeanne Cohen Lecture on Dance for the Fulbright Association in 2018. He can be reached at jonathan@batterydance.org

A FULBRIGHT JOURNEY TO MAURITIUS

SUSAN OPP

ABSTRACT

As a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Mauritius in 2021-2022, I was able to learn a great deal about Mauritian students and public service in this country. Teaching undergraduates about public sector ethics provided an opportunity to internationalize my teaching approach and helped me gain greater empathy for student needs. Examining urban and public service issues in a developing small island state with a colonial past has provided insights that will offer scholarly and practical insights for years to come.

Keywords: University of Mauritius • public sector • ethics • internationalization



INTRODUCTION

Most people in the United States have never heard of Mauritius. This small island nation located in the Indian Ocean is smaller than most U.S. states and rarely makes the international news. Traveling to this beautiful island nation from the United States is difficult and expensive. In fact, it took approximately 46 long and exhausting hours of travel from Denver, Colorado to arrive and then begin my Fulbright award in October 2021.

This was not the first time that I visited Mauritius. Less than two years before, during the spring 2020 semester, I was teaching in an international program-Semester at Sea-when we made an unexpected week-long stop in Mauritius after COVID-19 derailed our planned itinerary. When the Seychelles, India, and Malaysia all closed their borders to our floating campus, Mauritius welcomed the ship full of students and faculty and even greeted us with a traditional Mauritian dance and music called the “Sega” as we disembarked. During that brief visit, I was able to begin to see some of the beauty of the island nation and the resilience and kindness of the people living there. I was intent on returning to learn more about the hidden gem that is Mauritius.

TEACHING IN MAURITIUS

Due to COVID-19, my arrival was delayed as quarantine requirements shifted and University of Mauritius (UoM) reorganized their course schedules. Colleagues at UoM were gracious and supportive of my transition into the country and supported my goals with kindness and excitement. My interdisciplinary background provided an opportunity for collaboration between faculties on campus, Economics and Political Science, and I have learned a great deal from faculty in both programs.

Less than three weeks after arriving, and with just a few days' notice, I was assigned to teach a course for 2nd year political science and public administration students. Since UoM remained closed to students I was scheduled to teach through Zoom. From November through April, I had the honor of teaching a group of 53 undergraduate students the course titled "Ethics of Public Service." Teaching in a non-US context enabled me to critically evaluate my teaching techniques as well as my approach to topics in ways that have already proven useful in my teaching career. For example, although UoM is an English medium school, most students speak and write in French or Creole as their primary language. As I reflected on this, it became clear that my tendency to speak fast and use informal phrases was going to provide a challenge for some students. To be an effective teacher meant that I needed to approach lectures more carefully and deliberately to ensure comprehension and learning. Unexpected technology challenges, varying perspectives on world affairs, and overall skepticism of political institutions factored into the weekly class sessions at UoM. Teaching this course also provided me with an unexpected opportunity to travel to and lecture in Seychelles during my Fulbright experience.

I have spent my career teaching at large, well-resourced, state schools in the United States. Teaching in Mauritius was my first experience with purely non-US based students in an institution with limited teaching resources. Typical online platforms, like Canvas or Blackboard, are not available at UoM. Instead, most instructors utilize Google Classroom and their university Google accounts for teaching purposes. Unfortunately, at the beginning of my teaching assignment the IT department was backed up in processing requests and I did not have an official UoM email address. Without an official UoM email, I could not create a Google classroom that allowed students to use their official University emails to connect to the classroom page. Most students did not have a second Gmail account that would allow them to join a classroom page created with my personal email account. This technology issue posed an immediate challenge for distributing reading materials, sharing course documents, and posting grades. With no estimate on when a university email account would be created for me, I quickly pivoted and created a shared folder for course documents. While this was an imperfect and inefficient solution, it enabled me to immediately provide the necessary learning materials to students and avoid losing any further precious course time. Flexibility and patience have proven to be important traits for being an effective instructor in Mauritius.

In Mauritius, the experiences and opportunities of the local students vary widely and required me to adjust my long-held approaches to teaching. For example, very few of my UoM students have ever been outside of Mauritius. Their experiences are limited to the day-to-day activities on this small island and what they are exposed to through various media sources. For many media outlets, the U.S. dominates the news in the evenings so much so that I was

told “everyone goes to the U.S. at 6 pm and then returns at 7 pm.” Unfortunately, much of the news reporting focuses on crises and other negative events taking place. It became common for students to utilize discussion time to ask questions about things they have heard about the United States. A common question that was posed to me concerned the 2nd Amendment and gun rights. Many students, having only learned about this issue through the media, believed that walking down an average street in the United States was inherently dangerous and that guns were ever present. Others were keen to learn about the legal structure, identifying the 2nd amendment by name, particularly as it permits the right to firearms even when mass shooting events continue to happen. For many of these students I was the first American that they had ever met, and I was certainly the first they had the ability to ask these types of questions. These conversations meant that I was able to both dispel some myths that they held about the United States, but also provide valuable comparative lessons with respect to public administration and public service that will help them on their journeys to becoming public servants in the future. Alongside the curiosity about the U.S., students varied widely in their trust and respect for various political institutions. In a class about public sector ethics, it seemed that the many students believed the public sector, in Mauritius and abroad, were corrupt and incapable of serving the public interest. Talking through the imperfections in systems alongside opportunities for improvements allowed students to gain some perspective on how they might make a positive change in their future careers in public service.

In addition to the overall lack of international experience, my students also came to class with very different resources. For example, from a logistical standpoint, class assignments and course expectations needed to shift to accommodate the reality that many students do not have personal computers or reliable Internet service. With campus closed to students due to COVID-19 restrictions, access to computer labs was not an option for the students needing to utilize computers. At least half of the class did not have regular access to a computer or word processing software. As a result, class assignments and the class test were often submitted through photos taken of handwritten work and classes were often attended through a cellular phone with uneven connection quality. Alongside these individual differences in technology access, Mauritius frequently has power outages. These power outages usually last only a few minutes but are very common and can happen several times a day. This structural issue poses a unique challenge for a class being held through Zoom. At any given time, several students would drop off the Zoom class and return a few minutes later. I, too, was impacted by these outages and experienced my own drop from Zoom during the term when my electricity went out. That said, such structural challenges and differences served as an opportunity for me to really evaluate what it means to be an effective teacher, mentor to future public servants, and interest students in public administration and public sector ethics. Patience, compassion, and understanding are all key traits that I have expanded in my role as an educator through this teaching

experience. Furthermore, the electricity outages and internet access also provided real-time examples of some potential public service opportunities in Mauritius. Understanding the limitations of nonrenewable power sources on an island provided a real-time discussion opportunity of the potential of investing in more solar and wind power in Mauritius through the Government.

UoM structures classes into a two-hour lecture followed by a one-hour tutorial. Having never taught in this type of schedule, I elected to utilize the weekly tutorials for an in-depth case study analysis and discussion on important public sector ethics topics while I utilized lecture to cover theories and information important to the weekly lesson. Preparing and teaching this class offered me the opportunity to expand my own teaching into a deliberately international and comparative context. For tutorials, I included case studies that covered several continents and different types of government so that students could learn about ethical challenges across many different contexts. Including this diversity in cases and approaches to public sector ethics was as good for me as it was for the students. At no point in my career have I been able to study and teach about the ethics infrastructure of Zimbabwe, but this course enabled me to be deliberate in my global approach to the subject by forcing me to go beyond my comfort zone in case examples. As such, this course provided me with a unique opportunity to expand my own knowledge and understanding of the landscape of global public administration in unique ways that will positively impact my future students as I bring these examples back to my U.S. classroom. My future students will be exposed to important public administration lessons from around the world due, in large part, to this Fulbright experience.

My teaching experience in Mauritius has also already had a visible impact on my UoM students. In the aftermath of my course, I was able to meet with and discuss various opportunities with students that had gained a newfound passion and interest for public administration. Several of these students are currently working towards applying for a Fulbright Student award to continue their own educational journey in the United States. Others are actively preparing for the GRE exam to apply for a Masters program in public administration. Many of these students will remain in touch as I begin my journey back home and I fully expect that several will enter public service roles in their futures and make a positive impact on the world. The passion and desire to improve the global community I saw in my UoM students bode well for an improved public service future in Mauritius and abroad.

AN UNEXPECTED PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS OPPORTUNITY: SEYCHELLES WORKSHOP

Teaching public service ethics at UoM afforded me an unexpected opportunity to experience a neighboring country, Seychelles, during my Fulbright experience. The U.S. embassy in Mauritius serves as the embassy for both Mauritius and their neighbor, Seychelles. In early 2022, I was asked to participate, as the lead speaker, in a weeklong workshop in Seychelles focused on public ethics. After more than two years of only virtual events, a widespread desire to return to in-person events prompted the development of a multi-day public ethics event sponsored by the U.S. State Department and organized by the group “Citizens Democracy Watch” in Seychelles.

Over the course of several 8+ hour days, I met with various groups in Seychelles including civic organizations, the University of Seychelles, and public servants to lecture and teach about public ethics. For many of the participants, public ethics was a topic of great interest as Seychelles continues working to improve their public ethics standing in the world. The Seychellois people proved themselves to be exceptional hosts with a passion for public service. By experiencing an island very similar to Mauritius, this unique opportunity has provided me with the ability to possess an even greater understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by small island developing states as they continue to evolve beyond the time of British rule. During my short stay in Seychelles, I was able to provide important information on ethics infrastructure as well as make connections between local organizations and evidence-based work in the U.S. to support their long-term goals of good governance. The relationships forged in Seychelles will offer longstanding opportunities for collaboration and learning for me and for them.

CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN MAURITIUS: EMBRACING GLOBAL AND COMPARATIVE CONTEXTS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In addition to teaching in Mauritius and leading the workshop in Seychelles, I have been able to conduct research in Mauritius through a public policy and administration lens. My experience as a faculty member in the public administration field has been one of a mostly Americentric discipline. While there is a growing group of scholars that can be classified as international or comparative scholars; most of the core public administration research is U.S. based. My time researching various public administration and urban policy issues in Mauritius has provided me with the unique ability to refine and refocus my own research agenda into a more global perspective that will help move my own research toward a deliberate international and comparative approach in the years ahead.

For a discipline uniquely concerned with improving public service through applied research, there are many valuable lessons to be gleaned from approaching research in a comparative way. Lessons from other experiences, contexts, and cultures can provide unique and valuable knowledge for those concerned with improving the quality of public service in the United States. Focusing purely on the American approach to ethics infrastructure, for example, fails to recognize the many lessons that can be gleaned from the experiences of building this infrastructure in a young developing country with aspirations to modernize and improve their institutions. Examining and studying the actual building blocks of a public service organization offers unique insights into ways to improve the delivery and successes of America's public service goals.

The legacy of colonialism as well as environmental challenges associated with being a small island state have contributed to a range of challenges in urban development, planning, and policy. Mauritius provides an excel-

My time as a Fulbrighter in Mauritius has provided me with greater empathy for student needs, a wider perspective on global policy issues, the credibility to engage in robust comparative and international public administration work, and an overall appreciation of the kindness provided to me by the Mauritian people.

lent opportunity to learn about urban problems and policy solutions that will provide insights to the academic and public servant communities alike. The trial and error of delivering public services and the policy learning associated with this series of experiments can offer some important lessons for older communities in the United States that have similar challenges. At minimum, researching the public service challenges in Mauritius will provide lessons to future researchers and public servants seeking to understand the evolution of basic public services in a post-colonial context. This knowledge can offer the opportunity to refine urban planning and policy knowledge, offer insights to other developing countries, and even offer lessons for the United States when faced with similar public service challenges. Small island developing states, like Mauritius, are known in the academic literature to be resilient and adaptive. This resilience and the policy learning associated with it, can be viewed as an opportunity for scholars and practitioners seeking to improve their own work.

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CONCLUSIONS

It is easy to see Mauritius as a world-class resort destination with beautiful beaches. However, to only see the beaches is to miss the richness that is the community and the hard work that everyday Mauritians put into making this island a beautiful, sustainable, and safe place to live. My time as a Fulbrighter in Mauritius has provided me with greater empathy for

student needs, a wider perspective on global policy issues, the credibility to engage in robust comparative and international public administration work, and an overall appreciation of the kindness provided to me by the Mauritian people.

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Participants in the public service ethics workshop in Seychelles hosted by the US State Department and organized by the group “Citizens Democracy Watch” in Seychelles. Dr. Opp was the lead speaker at the workshop.

BIOGRAPHY

Susan Opp is the Schutte Chair of Public Affairs and Professor of Public Administration, Bloch School, University of Missouri- Kansas City. She was a Fulbright Scholar to Mauritius in 2021-2022. She can be reached at susan.opp@umkc.edu

A “SURVIVAL” AND GRASSROOTS GOVERNANCE MODEL FOR POST-MILITARY REGIME GOVERNANCE IN MYANMAR

CHARLES DAVID CRUMPTON

ABSTRACT

Crumpton was a Fulbright Scholar in Thailand in 2021-2022, which built on previous Fulbright Specialist experiences in Brazil and Thailand, and continued his five-decade global journey in responsive and inclusive local governance. The 2021-2022 Scholar Grant involved collaboration with refugee Myanmar scholars to visualize governance in post-military regime Myanmar. Their collaboration produced a vision of governance based on a grassroots perspective and supported by Myanmar and international experience in inclusive community-level planning and deliberative democracy.



Keywords: Myanmar • grassroots governance • deliberative democracy

Almost fifty years ago, I began a journey as an intern in my hometown’s budget office as part of the University of Georgia Master of Public Administration program that has since taken me across the United States, to South America, and most recently to Southeast Asia. On this journey, I engaged with and studied communities seeking to realize more responsive and inclusive local governance. This journey includes my “childhood” (my 20s and 30s) career in city management in six states of the United States of America (US). It also includes my doctoral research at Portland State University where I considered how public problem-solving on the local level often involves “engineering” intersectoral and inter-organizational governance solutions. It also includes two decades of applied research in eight states in the US focused on evaluating governance approaches to public problems ranging from inter-jurisdictional planning to the incarceration of illegal immigrant detainees, to responding to the criminalization of Americans suffering from mental health and substance abuse problems. Over the past decade, facilitated by a Fulbright Specialist Grant to the University of Brasília and the Federal University of Goiás in Brazil in 2015, and a second Specialist Grant to Khon Kaen University in Thailand in 2017, my journey in local governance expanded to include international and comparative inquiry. My 2021-2022 Fulbright Scholar experience with the School of Public Policy at Chiang Mai University in Thailand represents my journey’s most recent chapter.

The original plan was for my Fulbright Scholar Grant to be hosted by the University of Yangon in Myanmar for 2019-2020. This Scholar Grant involved collaborating with the university's faculty to enhance its public administration curriculum and perform public administration and governance-related research in the interest of contributing to the development of Myanmar's governance capacity and capability. With the arrival of COVID-19, my grant (like those of other Fulbright grantees) was delayed for more than a year. Then, on 1 February 2021, Myanmar experienced the agony of a violent military *coup d'état*. Fortunately, with the assistance of Fulbright's East Asia-Pacific Office, and through collaboration with the School of Public Policy at Chiang Mai University in Thailand, I was able to shift my Fulbright Scholar Grant experience to Chiang Mai. Since hundreds of thousands of expatriate Myanmar people reside in Chiang Mai Province, including many scholars and former government and business leaders who fled due to the *coup*, it was a fortuitous choice as a substitute location for my grant. My delayed and relocated Scholar Grant began in July 2021 and ended in March 2022.

My focus on governance in Myanmar dates to my Fulbright Specialist experience in Khon Kaen in 2017. At the College of Local Administration (COLA) my duties included lecturing and co-supervising a group of four masters and doctoral students from Myanmar. My roles as teacher and supervisor evolved into those of mentor and collaborator that led to my first visit to Myanmar in 2018. That visit led to a relationship with an international NGO, ActionAid-Myanmar, and first-hand experience with its efforts in grassroots governance-building in rural states and regions of Myanmar and its urban centers. The relationship with ActionAid-Myanmar developed into a collaboration that produced a variety of reports on its grassroots work in Yangon, Mandalay, and Chin, Kayah, and Kayin (Karen) States from 2018 to the present. My planned Fulbright Scholar Grant experience at the University of Yangon was a natural continuation of my growing engagement with governance-building in Myanmar.

The shift of my Scholar Grant to Chiang Mai University was facilitated by several helpful coincidences. With funding provided by Canada's International Development Research Centre, the School of Public Policy had plans to conduct a Summer Seminar for a group of inter-sectoral Myanmar scholars who had fled their nation due to the military coup. The School's leadership asked me to assist in designing and directing the seminar. The intent of the seminar was to focus on prospects for Myanmar's governance in a post-military regime future. So, not only did I have the good fortune of landing on my feet in a wonderful place like Chiang Mai, by happenstance my hosts there offered me an opportunity to do Myanmar-related work that both aligned with my original plans for the University of Yangon and fit the trajectory of my decades-long professional and scholarly interest and recent international work.

When I received information from the School of Public Policy regarding the backgrounds of my seminar fellows, I felt that my good luck had been transformed into an opportunity for me to learn more about the intersectoral challenges in Myanmar and share my experience and governance ideas with a group of serious changemakers. This group came from a variety of states and regions of Myanmar and included two former government employees from the energy and securities and exchange policy areas. Also included in the group were a development NGO worker, an analyst from a policy thinktank, and a journalist who previously worked for the *New York Times* and other international publications in several of Myanmar's conflict areas, including both the Rakhine State for coverage of the Arakan conflict with the Tatmadaw and the Rohingya refugee crisis. This group not only brought a commitment to governance change in Myanmar, but also inter-sectoral and diverse ethnic group and geographic understandings to inform my learning process and add substance to the seminar.

Beginning in June 2021, with help from my international research colleague in Maryland, Julia Roche, and in collaboration with my new colleagues at the School of Public Policy in Chiang Mai, I designed a seminar framework that focused on four conceptual areas: (1) peace, social stability, and reconciliation; (2) institution-building; (3) governance capacity-building; and (4) promoting the rights and interests of marginalized groups. Framed by these concepts over the course of four seminar sessions, the seminar fellows and I sought to answer four key questions: (1) What are Myanmar's governance priorities? (2) What actions are needed to address the nation's priorities? (3) What capabilities and areas of capacity must be developed or enhanced to address the nation's priorities? (4) How can Myanmar enhance these capabilities and capacity requirements on the national, state/regional, and local levels?

We also reflected upon a diverse set of related topics, specifically: centralization versus federalism versus localism in institutions of governance-building; moving beyond military authoritarianism or a hybrid (military/civilian) model of governance; building sustainability and resiliency into governance; the role of international interests; national institutions of governance; state and regional governance; urban governance; rural village and village tract governance; and international, national, state/regional, and local level NGOs.

To apply Myanmar expertise and experience and help to bring our consideration of this material to life, I was fortunate to have the assistance of three brilliant collaborators with extensive records of work in and about Myanmar: Mariana Cifuentes, Paul Taylor, and Ashley South. Their extensive – and unpaid – contributions were essential to the ultimate success of the seminar.

FOCUSING ON “SURVIVAL” AND GRASSROOTS GOVERNANCE

The International Development Research Centre’s funding requirements called for the Myanmar fellows to produce two policy briefs based on their seminar experience. Drawing upon the evidence and alternative frameworks that we explored during the seminar, in their policy briefs, the fellows chose to offer a new vision for the future governance of Myanmar. The fellows’ first brief considered the confluence of the weakness of nation’s institutions of governance, how the military *coup* further weakened institutional capacity in areas such as public health, ways in which the COVID-19 emergency exposed this weakness and exacerbated the consequences for those in need, and the emergence of grassroots responses to compensate for a dire situation. The fellows framed these grassroots responses as “survival governance.” They focused their study on an urban neighborhood level response called the Yellow Flag Movement, which involved community responses to the healthcare and other needs of households experiencing cases of COVID-19. In the second policy brief, the fellows considered the importance of making government decision-making on the local level more responsive and inclusive. The brief proposed that the position of township administrator, which was an appointive government position, become an elective position.

After our seminar ended in September 2021, the seminar fellows and I agreed that we should pursue practical connections for our work. The fellows were particularly concerned that discussions about the future of Myanmar among the Myanmar political former government, academic expatriate elite groups in Chiang Mai, and the international community, would be dominated by an elite top-down perspective. Their fear was that this perspective would not adequately consider the “survival” and grassroots priorities identified as an outcome of the seminar and reflected in the policy briefs. So, from September 2021 until my grant ended in March 2022, the Myanmar Fellows and I explored alternative ideas for the future shape of governance that would privilege the needs and priorities of the least advantaged living in rural villages and poor urban neighborhoods of the nation.

The post-seminar workgroup that the fellows and I formed reflected on the evidence that we considered during the seminar. This led to a focus on the survival needs of families in the nation’s least advantaged villages and urban neighborhoods and the myriad ways this focus could be translated into governance processes and policy from the grassroots level to the national level. As we re-examined evidence for the 2011-2021 window of democratic experimentation in Myanmar, the workgroup directed attention to evidence upon which I had previously reported based on the nationwide work of ActionAid-Myanmar in hundreds of villages and village tracts regarding inclusive community planning that emphasized the empowerment of historically marginalized groups. We also examined re-

sults of other experiments in grassroots governance-building reported by the Asia Foundation, USAID, UNDP, and other sources. As we reflected on this evidence, we often returned to an emotive and powerful imagine: a Myanmar village or urban neighborhood mother, who as she prepares her family's evening meal, reflects upon the "survival priorities" of her family. These include basic factors of daily life including nutrition, healthcare, housing, income, employment, safety, and the multitude of micro variables associated with these concerns. The workgroup was determined to identify an approach to governance and policymaking that would privilege the concerns of Myanmar's village and urban mothers. The goal was to identify ways to introduce that approach to the anticipated "constitutional conversation" regarding the post-military regime governance of the nation.

In addition to the evidence regarding grassroots governance-building in Myanmar, the workgroup also considered the international discourse concerning deliberative democracy and deliberative systems. It also assessed other experience from Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. For example, the workgroup reflected upon the case of Papua New Guinea and whether the "Melanesian Way" had influenced its constitutional conversation. In this case, the national governance-building project was visualized as a nation of villages that functioned as "village of villages." Beyond the romance of this image, the workgroup saw practical value in the idea of creating a national framing of governance that reflected village-level values and priorities. In March 2022, the workgroup applied evidence from Myanmar and the international literature to produce a report that may have an overly academic and burdensome title: *Visualising Governance Building in Myanmar: Introducing the Principles of Inductive Governance*. However, the group identified the word "inductive" as having important meaning suggesting it should be utilized as a teaching point in Myanmar's constitutional conversation. The workgroup's argument centered on the nation's future governance being built upon inclusive and deliberative governance at the grassroots level. Accordingly, Myanmar national policy should prioritize the needs of the nation's least advantaged and historically marginalized groups. In other words, the national governance and policy approach should be induced from grassroots processes and priorities. The workgroup's conceptualization of grassroots-driven governance processes and policymaking focused on the idea that those who best understand the needs at the grassroots level – villagers and urban neighborhood dwellers themselves – can facilitate inclusive participation in setting governance priorities that are ultimately reflected in national policy and administrative action. We visualized a governance structure that linked representative and deliberative processes from level to level, from every village, neighborhood, village tract/ward, and township ultimately to the state, region, and national capitals.

Beyond the importance of privileging the survival needs of Myanmar's least advantaged and structuring the nation's governance in more deeply democratic ways, the workgroup considered its proposed governance approach to have potentially practical value in overcoming some of Myanmar's most vexing and enduring problems. For instance, the workgroup believed that a village-oriented platform for public problem-solving could contribute to reducing or minimizing government-ethnic group and inter-ethnic conflict and support movement toward peaceful and stable governance solutions. It might offer an opportunity to do what John Rawls identified as necessary for the creation of an effective pluralistic society: find areas of overlapping consensus among groups with differing belief systems and societal objectives.

Of course, governance is more than inclusive and participatory processes of planning and priority setting. It requires an administrative approach that also reflects the values of the political process to responsively execute the priorities that emerge from it. As result, again drawing upon Myanmar's experience and international evidence, in addition to proposing a national "village of villages" governance approach to setting governance priorities, we also suggested how existing administrative resources might be redistributed and refocused to embrace the values of the new approach and provide administrative wherewithal to effectively operate. We also offered ideas regarding how additional administrative support can be found or produced to address existing administrative inadequacies. We recognized that introducing a new inclusive deliberative democracy/deliberative systems approach driven by village level priority setting at all levels of governance and in every state and region of Myanmar was not realistic. As a more realistic alternative, we focused on the most local levels of governance: villages, village tracts/wards, townships, and districts.

EPILOGUE: CONNECTING MANY DOTS

In May 2022 I returned to Chiang Mai, again primarily with a Myanmar focus. By contributing to curriculum design and teaching one of the institute's first session courses, I am working with a man from Karen State, Saw Kapi, to establish a public policy and governance institute designed to train Myanmar's future political and administrative leaders. Our first cohort includes about 50, primarily Karen, students. The post-seminar workgroup and I reconvened and added new members, including a former news presenter for Myanmar's national broadcasting service. As I revise this essay to fit the vision for *Fulbright Chronicles*, the workgroup has decided to formally organize (it is deliberating on names for itself that include words like, "local governance," "advocacy," "initiative," and "research"). It is also pursuing the idea of organizing a forum for the

many expatriate Myanmar interests in Chiang Mai. The idea centers on identifying their separate and common priorities and opportunities for collaboration. In addition, the forum would offer an opportunity for the workgroup to promote the ideas that it has developed over the past year.

I have also received a visiting professor invitation by Chiang Mai University's Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration for 2022

My continuing work in Chiang Mai regarding Myanmar and Thailand also connects dots with and reflects benefits of my broader Fulbright journey. [...] They have provided me with a firsthand understanding of both the personal enrichment to be realized as a Fulbrighter and the importance of the work that we do as we collaborate with students, colleagues, and citizens around the world.

and 2023. My work will involve collaborating with faculty members on their research projects concerning comparative public administration, local governance, and Myanmar. I am continuing my five-decade journey in directions that are currently very important to me. I also will be able to build upon my recent Myanmar experience in other ways. For instance, I have developed a collaboration with Ajarn Patamawadee Jongruck in my new faculty that involves application of some of the ideas from my rural grassroots research in Myanmar and the work of the seminar fellows to her consideration of grassroots governance among Karen villages in the hills of Northern Thailand.

My continuing work in Chiang Mai regarding Myanmar and Thailand also connects dots with and reflects benefits of my broader Fulbright journey. Experiences that I have enjoyed as a Fulbright Specialist in Goiânia, Brasília, and Khon Kaen, as a Fulbright Scholar in Chiang Mai, as Fulbright Specialist peer reviewer, and as a student grant applicant reviewer for the Binational Fulbright Commission in Egypt, have provided me with a firsthand understanding of both the personal enrichment to be realized as a Fulbrighter and the importance of the work that we do as we collaborate with students, colleagues, and citizens around the world.

NOTES

1. Visualizing Governance *Building in Myanmar: Introducing the Principles of Inductive Governance*, Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy. <https://spp.cmu.ac.th>, in press.
2. Rawls, J., (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
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David Crumpton having lunch in a Myanmar food restaurant in Chiang Mai with the SPP Summer Seminar Fellows (left to right: Crumpton, Yay Chann, Hsu Myatt, Seng Pin and Wai Moe).

BIOGRAPHY

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