

# FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4 (JANUARY 2023)



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• ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY • CULTURAL HERITAGE • COMMUNITY COLLEGE •  
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*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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*About and Contributing*

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](http://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](http://www.fulbright-chronicles.com)).

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## LOOKING BACK/LOOKING AHEAD

BRUCE B. SVARE AND KEVIN F. F. QUIGLEY

With this fourth issue, we conclude our first year of publishing *Fulbright Chronicles*. Here, we want to review what we have accomplished and discuss our plans for the future.

In establishing *Fulbright Chronicles*, we hoped to create a professional journal by and for Fulbrighters shining a light on their scholarship. To accomplish this goal, we formed an all-volunteer global editorial board of alums that would work together to create this journal (<https://fulbright-chronicles.com/editorial-board/>).

We wanted to bring a high level of professionalism to this startup, a peer-reviewed, quarterly journal advancing the scholarly work and exploring the enduring impact of Fulbright alumni from every discipline, every Fulbright award program, and every region of the world.

This past year, our 11 member Editorial Board worked diligently to help create our website, develop author guidelines, solicit, review, edit and then share articles via social media. Our 18 ad hoc reviewers (see list at the end of this issue) also played an instrumental role in our success this year. We believe that the teamwork associated with publishing four issues in less than a year, reflects the core value of Fulbright: smart, forward-looking, problem-solving cross-cultural collaboration.

With the Editorial Board's efforts and the savvy of Publishing Editor, Rob Ellis in England, we published four issues of 21 articles, 9 commentaries and 8 book reviews in well under a year. While short of our goal to have 50 percent of the articles by non-US Fulbrighters and to include articles from every Fulbright Program, during this first year we have made good progress towards that goal.

Fifteen of these articles were authored by US Fulbrighters, and 6 were authored by foreign (non-US) Fulbrighters. For commentaries, 7 were US Fulbrighters and 2 were authored by foreign Fulbrighters. For book reviews, 4 were authored by US Fulbrighters and 4 were authored by foreign Fulbrighters. In total, 26 of the 37 (70%) contributors to *Fulbright Chronicles* came from US and 11 of 37 (30%) came from foreign contributors.

Of the 41 authors whose work was published in the *Fulbright Chronicles* pages this year, 28 were scholar awardees, 2 were distinguished chairs, 2 were specialists, 5 were English language teaching assistants, 3 were pre-doctoral scholars, and 1 was a high school teaching fellow. Fulbrighters from the US, Australia, Mexico, Slovenia, India, the United Kingdom and Nigeria wrote for *Fulbright Chronicles*. They traveled to the US, South Korea, Latvia, Australia,

Spain, India, Malaysia, Mauritius, Brazil, Thailand, Iceland, Ireland, Kenya, Estonia, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Mexico, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Burma/Myanmar and Kosovo to conduct their research, teaching, consulting and a wide array of other professional activities.

The topics discussed in our pages during this year were wide ranging, deeply enriching, and inspirational. On vivid display was the ability of Fulbrighters to address important world problems and to do so in a framework of mutual understanding and partnership. The articles, commentaries and book reviews focused on the impact of Fulbright awards in developing global and cultural perspectives and cooperation, elevating career trajectories in terms of research and teaching accomplishments, and expanding the educational, environmental, economic, health and social conditions of host countries. While we are proud of our accomplishments to date, there is still a great deal to be achieved. Moving forward, we need to do better in having an equal distribution between foreign and US contributors. One initiative that should help is the further expansion of our editorial team in other foreign countries (Please see the advertisement for four new associate editorial positions on page 71).

However, adding editorial team members is not the only thing we can (and should) do. While reaching out to the Fulbright alumni membership as well as foreign commissions is something we regularly do, we need to double down on these efforts to ensure that we are really representing the enormous breadth and richness of the Fulbright program in our pages. We also depend upon you our readers to spread the word about *Fulbright Chronicles* and contribute articles.

A major accomplishment this year was the addition of a book review section, shepherded by our book review editor, Erika J. Waters. In the coming years, we hope to have special themed issues, podcasts, and interviews with extraordinarily distinguished Fulbrighters. However, in view of our desire to be indexed by leading bibliographic databases by the end of 2023, this year our main focus will continue to be the promotion of the scholarship of Fulbrighters from around the world.

The current issue of *Fulbright Chronicles*, the last issue of volume 1, is representative of the remarkable work of Fulbrighters. From her perspective as Director of the Peace Corps program and a former Fulbright Program Administrator, Jody Olsen writes about the essential dimension of trust that develops between Peace Corps volunteers and Fulbrighters with their respective hosts. Tremaine Smith and Anne Campbell propose how sustainability strategies could be promoted more vigorously in the Fulbright program in order to reduce negative environmental effects. Australian Carmel

*The topics discussed in our pages during this year were wide ranging, deeply enriching, and inspirational. On vivid display was the ability of Fulbrighters to address important world problems and to do so in a framework of mutual understanding and partnership.*

Dean recounts her Fulbright work on Broadway and how it transformed her career and allowed her to infuse her home country with new indigenous theater productions, as well as those transported from the US. Fulbright specialist Michael Czaja writes about his work bringing modern fire management protocols to Portugal. Mexican Marx Navarro-Castillo discusses how his Fulbright award helped him in his graduate studies in the United States and later opened doors for him in his important archeological work in his home country. Kuldeep Magi tells of his work bringing remote learning strategies to Thailand at a time when these pedagogical approaches were virtually nonexistent there. David Smith reports on how his Fulbright experience in Estonia impacted his career choices, provided him an opportunity to support global education in community colleges, and fueled his passion for advancing peacebuilding. Australian Brydie-Leigh Bartleet presents how her program of research in New York City exploring the ways in which music and the arts are addressing complex social issues, such as social inequity, are bringing about positive change in communities. Finally, this issue contains four more intriguing book reviews by Fulbrighters examining recent books authored by Fulbright alums.

Finally, we want to thank all those who have been instrumental in the success of *Fulbright Chronicles*. Our hope is that you will stay with us as we build on the foundational success of our first year. While we have accomplished a great deal to date, we are just getting started. Of course, aspiring to do more is the ethos that drives many Fulbrighters to continue their work after their Fulbright experience. We know, however, there are always new challenges and new horizons to explore. We look forward to continued engagement with you our readers, and we are counting on you to send us your contributions and your ideas for improvement. Together, we can more fully realize the promise of *Fulbright Chronicles*, illuminating the enduring impact of the Fulbright Program!

# COMMENTARIES

# TRUST: THE SUPERPOWER FOR THE FULBRIGHT AND PEACE CORPS PROGRAM

JODY K. OLSEN

## ABSTRACT

Trust is core to both the Fulbright and US Peace Corps programs, built through participant promises, commitments, mutual reciprocal relationships, and integrity. Decades of experiences have reinforced the value of these programs to participants and others in often vulnerable places of service. This trust is significant in situations of high risk, as seen when seven thousand US Peace Corps Volunteers were evacuated in March 2020 because of Covid-19. The trust built through Fulbright and Peace Corps ensures these programs' continued success.

**Keywords:** Peace Corps • Fulbright • Trust • Exchange • International



## TRUST IS ESSENTIAL

Trust is core to the value of both the Fulbright and US Peace Corps programs, a theme evident in the origins of both programs. In introducing the legislation in 1946, Senator Fulbright said, “The Fulbright Program’s mission is to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby increase the chance that nations will learn at least to live in peace and friendship.” Further to this, the first Peace Corps legislation of 1961 began with the words, “The purpose of this act is to promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps... with men and women...willing to serve...” As Director of both Council of the International Exchange for Scholars (CIES) and the Peace Corps, I have seen a key common theme: making a difference for human betterment and peace through individual trust relationships. It occurs in the particular, the challenging, and the vulnerable places we encounter, one person, one encounter at a time. Making a difference depends on the relationships forged through working closely and collaboratively, creating the trust essential to human development.

Both Fulbright and Peace Corps receive funding from the US Congress, but, importantly, unlike other US Government programs, they are built on the willingness of individuals to trust leaving the comfort of a home environment to approach and engage with strangers over months or years in new languages, traditions, and cultures. Each program has remained true

to participants' willingness to create their experiences within the founders' visions. Each year, seven to eight thousand participants per program commit to making a difference by volunteering time, expertise, and themselves in over one-hundred forty countries.

As Fulbright scholar Peggy Maisel told me, "If we make a difference in the world, we make it not universally, but in the particular place we find ourselves. We live in the common, the specific, the immediate. We see it and know its reality, wherever we are." Similarly, a Peace Corps Volunteer said, "As a thank you, the girls gave me a painting of a road leading somewhere with one duck walking down that road. I am the duck. As the duck walks, he leaves footprints, leaving a piece of himself in the lives of those he has touched." (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/stories/a-club-designed-to-give-young-women-girls-the-confidence-abilities-to-pursue-their-dreams/>)

## HOW TRUST IS BUILT

Both the Peace Corps Volunteer and the Fulbrighter enter new international relationships with the sincerity, authenticity, integrity, and honor that build trust. This vulnerability and risk taking shown in the exchanges encourage a reciprocal response by host academic and community partners. Each gives away part of self and gains new perspectives for long-term engaged partnerships.

As authors Robert C. Solomon and Fernando Flores suggest in *Building Trust*, "Trusting is an emotional skill, something that we individuals do; it is something we make, we create, we build, we maintain, we sustain with our promises, our commitments, our emotions, and our sense of integrity... The freedom provided by trust is the freedom to approach and engage with strangers and ... to think for oneself and speak up with one's ideas."

Both programs offer participants life-changing perspectives and caring partnerships drawn from these interactions. Our counterparts take similar risks in understanding us, the beginning steps toward broader peace.

## HOW TRUST UNDERPINS FULBRIGHT AND PEACE CORPS EXPERIENCES

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tunisia, I ate my daily noon meal with my Arab language teaching colleague's extended family while we sorted out daily events, family schedules, and food preferences in three languages and two religions. When Suad placed a half a cow's head on my plate for a special Friday meal, I struggled in halting Arabic to decline the offer. My brain couldn't bring my stomach to engage. That moment tested friendship, trust, honesty, and my meager communication skills. Midway through my stumbling

Arabic, the others around the table looked at my feeble gestures and laughed. Suad, with her wide grin, took me into the kitchen and handed me ingredients to make myself couscous. That moment deepened our friendship for years as I stripped myself of who I thought I should be and started over.

Similarly, Fulbrighters have to be vulnerable and open to new experiences. A Fulbright scholar to Kenya, Paul Basler, organized a small Kenyan band to play music inspired by Kenyan and American folk tunes. At one session, the Kenyatta University president listened, and, without realizing his own actions, began imitating the rhythm of the jam session. He sheepishly asked if he could bring his old horn and join the group. Dr. Basler and the president continued playing, composing music, and giving concerts together throughout the year. Dr. Basler told me later, “I learned we are not as important as we think we are.” A year later, he was voted teacher of the year at his university. “I try to speak to the humanity and spirit of the person. One person’s efforts do make a difference. It doesn’t matter whether or not they understand what that difference will be when the odyssey begins.”

When we commit to working with our Fulbright and Peace Corps partners, we have the potential to create deep, enduring relationships, which can touch national leaders. The president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, captured this level of trust when he spoke to new Peace Corps Volunteers returning back to Rwanda in 2009, after the genocide there. “While some consider development mostly in terms of infusion of capital, budgets and head counts, we in Rwanda place equal importance to relationships between peoples who have a passion to learn from one another, preparing the next generation of teachers, administrators, and CEOs to see the exchange of values and ideas as the way to build the competencies of our people, and to create a prosperous nation.” Those words still resonate to individual Fulbrighters and Volunteers committing to relationships that build competencies necessary to build a stronger nation.

## **TRUST SUSTAINED OVER TIME**

Odysseys by individual Peace Corps Volunteers forged over six decades made the total evacuation of seven thousand Volunteers due of Covid-19 in 2020 possible. As I sent out the immediate evacuation order on March 15, I trusted that in sixty-one countries, the thousands of host country families, teachers, clinic directors, local taxi drivers, community security officers, airlines, and medical officials that support Volunteers would selflessly offer their help. These thousands shared painful good-byes and supported the safe movement of all of the volunteers to capital cities, international airports, charter flights to the US over the course of nine days without illness or accident. The decades of Volunteers speaking local languages, living with host families, working side-by-side their counter-parts laid the groundwork for this unprecedented and remarkably smooth evacuation, unmatched by any other global organization. And trust built over decades assured communities

and national governments that the evacuation was due to the global health threat, and that the partnership would continue, Volunteers would return. Trust acts as a governing mechanism in situations of high risk. Volunteers are now being welcomed back.

## CONCLUSION

I have been shaped by my Peace Corps experience. I listen to understand other perspectives and fold them into evolving actions and decisions. I become different with each situation, each listening moment, each exchange. These experiences, like mine, have been replicated thousands of times over the years by Peace Corps, Fulbright, and other international exchange programs. Fundamentally, they are based on our shared humanity, approaching each other with humility, and acting with respect for and trust in each other. We share the stories of our humanness in these exchanges. We learn to set aside our differences to “Improve the quality of life for people everywhere.” The continued individual reciprocal partnerships of program participants across the cultures and countries help counter mis-information and fear that breed hostility and denigrate human conditions. The “peace” referred to in the original references is built on the thousands of slowly built trusting partnerships and can continue to do so for decades to come.

*Fulbright and Peace Corps . . . are based on our shared humanity, approaching each other with humility, and acting with respect for and trust in each other.*

## NOTES

1. For more information on the Fulbright Program and the individual who inspired it, please go to: Fulbright, J. William, retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180612142716/https://eca.state.gov/fulbright/about-fulbright/history/j-william-fulbright/j-william-fulbright-quotes>
2. More information about the Peace Corps evacuation can be found at: Olsen, Jody. Effective Cross-National Respectful Partnerships: A Case Study of Peace Corps’ Volunteer Covid-19 Volunteer Evacuation, *Annals of Global Health*. 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/aogh.3696>



Jody Olsen as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tunisia,  
1966-1968

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**BIOGRAPHY**

Josephine (Jody) Olsen, PhD, served as the 20th Director of the Peace Corps between March, 2018–January, 2021 including evacuating all 7,000 Peace Corps Volunteers from 61 countries in March 2020. Dr. Olsen also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tunisia and in five senior level positions with the agency, including Deputy Director. In the 90s, she was Director of the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars, the organization that leads the Fulbright Senior Scholar Program. Dr. Olsen received a BS from the University of Utah, a Master's in Social Work from the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and a PhD from the University of Maryland, College Park. Among her many awards, she has received the University of Maryland President's Award, the University of Utah's alumni of the year award, and two honorary doctorates. Jody can be reached at [jodyolsen@gmail.com](mailto:jodyolsen@gmail.com)

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# FULBRIGHT AND SUSTAINABILITY: FIVE ACTIONS FOR THE PLANET

TREMAINE SMITH AND ANNE C. CAMPBELL



## ABSTRACT

In the era of climate change, this commentary discusses actions that Fulbright staff and participants can take to enhance sustainability. The five actions include choosing greener travel, designing pro-environment orientations, including climate action in service, teaching and learning about sustainability, and sustaining relationships online. Through these sustainable actions, Fulbright can be a leader in sustainability in the same way it is seen as a leader in exchange and diplomacy.

**Keywords:** international exchange • sustainability • climate change



## INTRODUCTION

Senator J. William Fulbright believed that the exchange of leaders and scholars would reduce war and build global peace. Yet the geopolitical and environmental landscape has changed dramatically since the Fulbright Act was signed in 1946. Today we are faced with global climate change, which according to a recent statement by United Nations expert Dr. Ian Fry, “is the largest, most pervasive threat to the natural environment and societies the world has ever experienced.” Climate change has disrupted society, industry, and education and affected every living being on the planet. Importantly, climate change leads to conflict, forced migration, destruction, and nationalism – all challenges that Senator Fulbright aimed to combat with the Fulbright Program.

In this context, we began wondering: How is Fulbright responding to climate change? Our ideas come from several sources, motivated by our interest in social justice and international education. The first is climate justice education, which focuses on peoples’ experiences with climate change and human rights. According to researcher Sarah Riggs Stapleton, by learning about the concrete outcomes of climate change, we can change our behaviors to reduce impact on the most marginalized. The second source is a growing movement to recognize the environmental impact of educational exchange. For instance, the Climate Action Network for International Educators (CANIE) has released an ambitious set of commitments for climate action in international education

*Fulbright staff and participants can . . . enhance sustainability [through] greener travel, designing pro-environment orientations, including climate action in service, teaching and learning about sustainability, and sustaining relationships online.*

called the CANIE Accord. The third source is research on the thorny ethics of promoting international education – which is highly valued – but often necessitates carbon emissions. Recent research by one of the co-authors (Anne Campbell, with coauthors Nguyen and Stewart), demonstrates that these ethical concerns are held by both participants and administrators; in fact, administrators suggested less travel and advocated for more online and local exchanges.

With these concepts in mind, we offer five suggested actions for Fulbright program staff, partners, and grantees to consider. We understand that some of these recommendations are already happening. Our hope is to connect and move ideas forward in Fulbright headquarters and Commissions, in the classrooms where we teach, and in the conscience of Fulbrighters around the world. Links to additional reading are included at the conclusion.

### **SUSTAINABLE ACTION 1: CHOOSE GREENER TRAVEL**

As recipients of US Government funding, Fulbrighters must adhere to the Fly America Act (FAA). It states that travelers whose travel is paid for by the federal government are required to use a “US flag” air carrier service. The policy is seemingly about American tax money going to support US companies and ensuring that carriers comply with US laws and regulations. However, it may be unintentionally increasing greenhouse gasses. By prioritizing US carriers over others, Fulbrighters may be forced to take more short, connecting flights, thereby increasing their carbon outlay.

For example, if a Fulbrighter is going from San Francisco to Edinburgh, they can choose three different options: an FAA-compliant flight on United Airlines; a non-FAA-compliant flight on British Airways; or a mix of flying and taking a train. Based on data from Google Flights (accessed October 19, 2022), the FAA-compliant United route emits 42% more carbon than a British Airways flight. It is \$116 less expensive, but it is also 3.5 hours longer. However, choosing to take a direct United Airlines flight from San Francisco to London and a train from London to Edinburgh, a Fulbrighter would spend about the same amount of time and cost as the first United flight. But this unconventional route saves about 318 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per traveler. If similar CO<sub>2</sub> savings were possible for each of the 8,000 Fulbrighters, the Fulbright program could reduce a whopping 2.5 million kg outlay annually.

### **SUSTAINABLE ACTION 2: DESIGN PRO-ENVIRONMENT ORIENTATIONS**

Building on lessons of the pandemic, the Fulbright Program has identified ways to create sustainable and inclusive opportunities worldwide. Examples include holding online orientations, sharing green packing lists, and having low-impact in-country orientations with little swag, paper, and plastic waste. Welcome orientations also could include information about the environmental

situation in the country, advise Fulbrighters on local environmental efforts, and address current climate-related social justice issues in local communities. For example, in Kosovo where one of the co-authors (Anne Campbell) currently lives, there is considerable information about the anticipated rolling blackouts due to the European energy crisis, but there is little discussion about ways to recycle information about how to mitigate the impact of persistent poor air quality.

### **SUSTAINABLE ACTION 3: INCLUDING CLIMATE ACTION IN SERVICE**

During co-author Tremaine Smith's time in Sri Lanka, he participated in beach cleanups and community projects to promote environmentalism. Granted, for more Fulbrighters to be involved in such initiatives, Fulbright Commissions and staff may need to identify local initiatives and further emphasize environmental justice. This could also include having conversations with Fulbrighters, connecting them with local activists and changemakers who understand the relationship between climate and education, design service projects that align with the Sustainable Development Goals and national environmental plans. Having more of these opportunities would benefit Fulbright by demonstrating that those selected for the program truly are leaders in their fields and communities through the ways they give back to their host communities. It may also benefit Fulbrighters in developing their intercultural competence skills as they work on local initiatives and build partnerships.

### **SUSTAINABLE ACTION 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY**

Teachers the world over can prepare their students to question and challenge the status quo. Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) take on this task in a new culture, and they should connect with local educators to discuss and learn about important social issues such as climate change, sustainability, and environmental justice. These topics can be embedded in their lesson plans, taught through experiential learning in the field, or explored through different school projects. A Fulbright video series dedicated to teaching sustainability in classrooms, could lead to improved environmental justice lesson plans shared across countries. Moreover, Fulbrighters are far reaching in their interests, so local or international environmental topics could be included in commission hosted talks.

## SUSTAINABLE ACTION 5: SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS ONLINE AND THROUGH ALUMNI NETWORKS

Keeping relationships vibrant via Zoom and other online platforms, or through alumni networks, can increase the depth and length of partnerships after the Fulbrighter returns home. Some alumni groups are working on environmental and sustainability projects—such as encouraging sustainable investments. There are also multiple possibilities to expand Fulbright via Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). By further engaging students and scholars online, Fulbright can use COIL to enhance teaching and continue thought-provoking discussions. The pandemic demonstrated that people can successfully engage online if there is quality content and reliable technology. Building on this momentum, Fulbright can continue to promote and host online meetings and forums across countries and within alumni networks.

It takes significant planning, ongoing communication, and considerable effort to establish and maintain mutually-beneficial, international relationships. This commentary intends to share five concrete actions for the Fulbright program. Fulbright is a leader in educational exchange and diplomacy. Through these actions, Fulbright can also be a leader in sustainability.

### NOTES

1. The CANIE Accord. (n.d.) Climate Action Network for International Educators. <https://canie.org/the-canie-accord>
2. Nikula, PT, & Gaalen, A. van (2021). Balancing International Education and its Carbon Footprint (Critical Internationalization Studies Network Newsletter). *Critical Voices* 1(4). <https://criticalinternationalization.net/blog/>
3. Campbell, A. C., Nguyen, T., & Stewart, M. (2022). Promoting international student mobility for sustainability? International educators navigate conflicting realities and emotions in a time of climate change. *Journal of Studies in International Education, Special Issue on Environmental Sustainability*, Online First. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153221121386>

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### BIOGRAPHY

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# ARTICLES

# HOW MY FULBRIGHT TOOK ME TO BROADWAY AND HELPED ME DISCOVER THE DREAM AND DILEMMA OF CREATING NEW MUSICALS

CARMEL DEAN

## ABSTRACT

Without the Fulbright experience that brought me from Australia to New York, I would never have been able to step inside the traditionally American artform of the new musical. Yet is Broadway the only place that new musicals can succeed? Or can Australian-made musicals make their mark, not only on its home turf, but on an international platform? It was Fulbright's unique focus on the international exchange of ideas that helped me realize that the bridge between Broadway and Australia can (and should) go both ways.

**Keywords:** Broadway • musicals • electricity • theater • new musicals



Is Broadway the only place new musicals can succeed? Or can Australian-made musicals make their mark, not only on its home turf, but on an international platform? After all, most of the big commercial musicals produced in Australia originated in New York. If Australians contribute widely to other global industries such as movies and sports, and we are universally loved for our culture, sense of humor, and unique stories—can the bridge between Broadway and Australia go two ways?

Like so many other young self-professed theater nerds, I always dreamt of heading to New York and basking in the bright lights of Broadway. Growing up in Perth, Western Australia, however, I couldn't have been any further away from that dream—and yet as a young classically trained pianist “gone rogue,” I amassed a collection of Broadway cast albums and video recordings for the ages, making the distance feel almost non-existent. Perth also had plenty of opportunities for us homegrown thespians to immerse ourselves in theater life. As a budding musical director (and wannabe actor), I threw myself into community theater. I fell in love over and over again with shows such as *West Side Story*, *The Sound of Music*, *Chicago*, *Godspell*, and other classics, as well as discovering lesser-known shows, such as *Assassins* and *Merrily We Roll Along* by my now-favorite musical theater writer, Stephen Sondheim.

*Fulbright's unique focus on the international exchange of ideas . . . helped shape my understanding that the bridge between Broadway and Australia can (and should) go both ways*

My passion for the artform took me to one of Australia's most respected musical theater training grounds, which just happened to also be in Perth, WAAPA (the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts). I dropped the acting and honed in on what I was good at, musical direction (accompanying singers, arranging music, and conducting musicians). Upon graduation in 1999, I was lucky enough to be awarded a Fulbright scholarship. Naturally, I headed to The Big Apple, biting off anything I could chew that was related to musical theater: studying the art form; the history; seeing as many shows as I could afford; and even meeting several of my idols. In 2003 I received a Master's in Musical Theater Writing from New York University, but my education in the business was actually just beginning.

### SHOW BUSINESS

What dawned on me in those early years in New York was that Broadway wasn't just a destination for song and dance fanatics—it is a billion-dollar industry. It is a beacon of Times Square, a massive and vital part of New York City tourism. For any business to thrive, it needs to be constantly growing and evolving. I mean, there are only so many times one can see *The Phantom of the Opera* or *The Lion King*, right? Venturing in and out of grungy rehearsal studios, tiny downtown theaters, and even writers' living rooms, I began to witness a system in which new musicals are constantly being tested out. Although there is no blueprint for creating a hit, the goal for each seedling of a show is still the same—to bloom into a successful Broadway production and gain long-lasting and global recognition, just as the classics I'd grown up with back home.

Whilst I'd found myself in the ultimate labor and delivery ward of the new musical, the thing was, for the amount of joy and exhilaration that experiencing a musical, old OR new can bring, what I didn't realize was that creating new musicals is exponentially difficult. There is no guarantee that a new musical will ever make it to a full production, let alone commercially or critically succeed. No one has ever figured out the formula for creating a hit show. On average, 80% of producers and investors will not recoup their investment in a Broadway show. In addition to the financial risks, it is a long, arduous process that can take anywhere from two to ten years. This time is spent writing the book (the dialogue spoken by the actors), the score (music and lyrics), and several "29-hour readings" (29 hours being the maximum time actors can be employed for that step in the process, per a long-standing contract between Actors Equity and The Broadway League of Producers) where the book is read and the songs sung at music stands. Then there will be several multi-week choreography/staging workshops where the material is "put on its feet," but still in a rehearsal studio. And by the way, these steps are never back-to-back. There will oftentimes be many months between them whilst the creators work on rewrites (and, being freelance artists, they often have other shows they are working on and other schedules to juggle). Eventually

if there is enough belief in the trajectory of the show (i.e., producers with money), there will be an “out-of-town” production where it is tested for the first time in a theater in front of an audience with all the production elements (sets, costumes, musicians, etc.). During the months and years leading up to this moment, millions of dollars need to be raised (Broadway musicals, on average, cost \$10-20 million to produce). Then, and only then, if press reviews and word-of-mouth have been positive, the producers will vie for one of the forty-one theaters on Broadway. If the theater gods are smiling, the show will “come in” to New York. Then, well, you cross your fingers and hope that you are in the 20% of shows which recoup their overhead costs and enjoy a successful Broadway run.

Of course, this is the business side of show business, and that doesn't diminish the thrill of creating a new Broadway show. To be a part of an original musical, especially if it records a cast album, wins Tony Awards, and gains industry hype, is incredibly satisfying. You become part of Broadway history. Somewhere in a city on the other side of the world, a young person is poring over the liner notes of a cast album or watching YouTube clips of a Broadway show. Even more exciting, if the show is successful in New York, it goes on to have a life elsewhere, via a national tour, a West End production and other international productions, and potential licensure of the book and score to regional theaters, community groups and schools. I was incredibly lucky that the first Broadway show I was a part of followed this trajectory. It was the moment I first felt my pre-and post-Fulbright worlds collide.

## ON BROADWAY

After graduating from NYU, I was hired by one of my mentors, William Finn, the legendary composer/lyricist, to be the Vocal Arranger and Associate Conductor of his newest work, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Ironically, given the above statistics about new shows taking seemingly forever to come to life, “*Spelling Bee*” had one of the fastest and most successful trajectories in recent Broadway history, and one that my now 20-year career hasn't come close to again. *Spelling Bee* had a short (two-year) development period, a smooth out-of-town tryout, and a sold-out season at an Off-Broadway theater. After garnering rave reviews, it transferred to Broadway in 2005, where it ran for almost three years. It truly was a Broadway success story.

*Spelling Bee*'s rise to distinction made theater owners in Australia (and elsewhere) take note. In 2006 I was invited to be the Musical Advisor for the joint Melbourne and Sydney Theater Companies' own productions of *Spelling Bee*. In this role I was able to facilitate William Finn's visit to Melbourne, where he worked with the director, choreographer, and cast, affording a valuable connection between Australian and New York creatives. The MTC and STC productions went on to receive glowing reviews by the Australian press (and as a side note, it was thrilling to hear my vocal arrangements for a Broadway musical performed on my home turf!). Although the name of the show may

not have the same recognition as other musicals of the early 2000s, such as *Wicked*, *Avenue Q*, or *The Book of Mormon*, *Spelling Bee* has proven its place in the canon. It is still one of the most produced musicals in high schools and regional/community theaters around the world. I often receive requests to talk to young theater artists who are doing their own version of the show and have been able to facilitate virtual meetings with William Finn and the other American creatives with students at my alma mater, WAAPA. Unlike when I was studying at WAAPA, thanks to technology, connecting with and learning directly from a Broadway professional isn't the impossible dream that it once was.

Recently—mid pandemic, sandwiched in between industry shutdowns and quarantines—I returned to the Sydney Theater Company to Music Direct their production of another American musical, *Fun Home*. I had not been involved in the Broadway production, but I saw it in 2015 and admired it greatly. As we embarked on rehearsals for the Sydney production, I called the show's writers, Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron (who incidentally were the first female writing team to win a Tony Award for Best Score and with whom I had crossed paths on other projects) and organized a virtual meeting between them and the Australian cast. Again, being able to discuss the evolution of the show with the people who created it on the other side of the world was an invaluable resource to the Australian company.

I bounced back and forth between Australia and America (I became a dual citizen in 2018) while my New York-based career within this niche market evolved. Yet, I've found myself asking the same question: Knowing what we know about how new musicals are created, is New York the only place that can support and sustain the creation of new work, or can it happen elsewhere?

## **BUILDING BRIDGES**

There is no question that Australia produces great talent. Just look at Tim Minchin (composer of *Matilda* and *Groundhog Day*, which both enjoyed Broadway runs) and Eddie Perfect (composer of *King Kong* and *Beetlejuice*, the latter of which is still running in NYC). These are just two examples of the many talented theater creators I know Down Under. Eddie and Tim's Broadway musicals; however, were not developed in Australia. I can count on one hand the number of shows which have begun in Australia and transferred to The Great White Way. One example is *The Boy From Oz*, a musical about Australian and international pop icon Peter Allen, which started in Australia and ran on Broadway for a year (and starred Australian-born Hollywood darling, Hugh Jackman). Another example is the musical adaptation of *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, which launched in Australia and went on to enjoy a 16-month Broadway run, as well as subsequent tours. *King Kong* was first produced in Australia, then after further development in New York, transferred to Broadway.

In addition to the myriad challenges of making new musicals anywhere in the world, Australia has its own hurdles to overcome. One of its biggest is that theater is just not an inherent part of Australian culture. Tourists don't come to Australia to see musicals; they come to experience our landscapes and landmarks. Most Australians spend their free time enjoying the outdoors, watching, or playing sports, and drinking (it's one of our national pastimes). Thus, the audience pool at home is much smaller. Which of course then affects the amount of funding the industry receives. The Liberal (conservative) Australian government slashed funding to the Arts sector throughout its last decade of governing. Thankfully with a recent change to Labor government, the Arts will be more supported in the future—but it is still a struggle, as theater is not often a priority. Interestingly, a major difference between Australian and American funding is that American theater is often funded by private donors and organizations, whereas the majority of theater companies in Australia are funded by the local and federal governments.

I'm pleased to report that there is at least one Australian show in the works eyeing a Broadway run. *Muriel's Wedding*, a stage adaptation of the hit Australian movie, which was originally produced by the Sydney Theater Company. They recently held a developmental workshop in NYC (Its co-producer is Global Creatures, an Australian production company that also helmed *King Kong*, and more recently the Tony Award-winning musical *Moulin Rouge*, which is currently enjoying a successful run on both Broadway and in Australia). There is the smaller-scale Australian musical *Fangirls*, a sold-out and much-extended hit that played in both Sydney and Melbourne, which potentially could make it big in America if it lands in the lap of the right producers. *Fangirls* was originally produced by the Sydney theater company, Belvoir St, which alongside fellow Sydney company, The Hayes, frequently champions and encourages new Australian work.

One additional upcoming project being developed in Australia is a highly ambitious, large-scale new musical depicting a uniquely Australian story using the music of an Australian rock icon (I am not permitted to reveal more details just yet). It is being shepherded by The Michael Cassel Group, a Sydney-based production company, who as well as co-producing *Hamilton* in Australia, also co-produced the recent Broadway productions *MJ* and the upcoming *Almost Famous*. I am honored to have been given the position of Music Supervisor and Arranger for this project, and although I have had many opportunities over the last twenty years to use the skills I learned and honed in the US in Australia, this is the first time I've been a part of creating a truly home-grown original Australian musical from the ground up—and I couldn't be more thrilled about it.

Without my Fulbright experience in New York, I would never have been able to step inside the world of new musicals to study this unique artform. It was an opportunity that has shaped my entire adult life and continues to do so. Through straddling both countries' industries, I hope to continue bridging

the gap between Broadway and Australia for my colleagues and other young Australian artists, because as I've come to learn, theater people are some of the most resilient and driven people in the world, no matter where they are practicing their craft. They deserve to have their voices heard. Yes, if we're lucky, we can travel to places like New York to see our favorite musicals. But our homelands are also teeming with rich, complex untold stories. By nurturing and producing our own theater, we're not only preserving these stories, but demonstrating how truly universal this artform is.

## NOTES

1. *The Broadway League*. The national trade association for the commercial theater industry. The League serves as the central hub for statistical information about Broadway theater production in North America. <https://www.broadwayleague.com/home/>
2. *Playbill*. Provides an overview of current happenings in the American theater industry. <https://www.playbill.com>
3. *Aussie Theater*. Provides an overview of current happenings in the Australian theater industry. <https://www.aussietheater.com.au>
4. *Well-Behaved Women* is a collection of story-songs sung from the imagined perspectives of some of history's most impactful female trailblazers. [www.wellbehavedwomenmusical.com](http://www.wellbehavedwomenmusical.com)



The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee with  
“guest speller” Julie Andrews

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## BIOGRAPHY

Carmel Dean was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 2000, receiving her master's in Musical Theater Writing from New York University in 2003. She is an Australian-born composer/lyricist, musical director, and arranger, whose works spans many facets of the music and theater

industries. Carmel's Broadway credits include *If/Then* (starring Idina Menzel), *American Idiot*, *Hands on a Hardbody*, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. She is the Musical Supervisor/Arranger/Co-Orchestrator of the upcoming Broadway musical *The Notebook* (with a score by Ingrid Michaelson). Her compositional debut, *Renascence*, was produced Off-Broadway by the acclaimed theater company Transport Group, and subsequently won the 2018 Off-Broadway Alliance Award for Best New Musical. Her song cycle *Well-Behaved Women* premiered at Joe's Pub in January 2020 to sold-out performances, and received rave reviews for its production in Sydney, Australia. She has been commissioned to write the new musical *Maiden Voyage* with Mindi Dickstein (Broadway's *Little Women*) for New Works Provincetown. Other credits include Music Direction for *Fun Home* at Sydney Theater Company, where she recently received the Sydney Theater Critics Award for Best Musical Direction. Additional roles include Vocal Arranger for jam-band Phish and Trey Anastasio (Madison Square Garden; Las Vegas; Chicago's Wrigley Field); performer with Green Day on the 52nd Annual Grammy Awards; and former musical director for Broadway legend Chita Rivera. Carmel holds an MFA from New York University's Graduate Musical Theater Writing Program, is a current member of the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Workshop, is a member the Dramatists Guild of America Music Committee, and sits on the Advisory Board for Maestra Music, a non-profit formed to support and connect women and non-binary musicians in the musical theater industry. She can be contacted at: [carmiedean@mac.com](mailto:carmiedean@mac.com)

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# FULBRIGHT SPECIALISTS IN A TIME OF CHANGE

MICHAEL R. CZAJA

## ABSTRACT

Fulbright Specialists often execute projects during times of complexity and change. Recognizing how an individual project fits within the larger environment contributes to its success. A recent rural fire management project in Portugal provides applicable lessons for those Fulbrighters whose host is dealing with changes to long-established processes. One key lesson is to never underestimate how individual experience and insight contribute to mentally framing the project. Solutions applicable today may not be appropriate tomorrow.

**Keywords:** Portugal • fire management • complex • rural



## INTRODUCTION

During the 2021 celebration of the Fulbright Program's 75th anniversary, the Fulbright Specialist Forum highlighted the role Fulbrighters play in building connections in a complex and changing world. My experience as a 2022 Fulbright Specialist in Portugal reflected this unique opportunity provided to those participating in the program. Throughout my public administration project, I often framed my experience with a statement made by the French political scientist, Professor Bernard B. Fall.

Professor Fall presented a lecture at the US Naval War College in December, 1964. The topic dealt with understanding the political dynamics of insurgencies then confronting governments across the globe. As a conclusion, he introduced a concept I suggest continues to be applicable to Fulbright Specialists when attempting to conceptually place their projects within complicated, rapidly evolving situations or problem sets across various disciplines: "If it works, it is obsolete." As Professor Fall observed, the reality on the ground may require replacing well-working but routine solutions with innovative approaches and ideas.

## CHANGES IN PORTUGUESE RURAL FIRE MANAGEMENT

I used Fall's observation as a mental reference during my project, which focused on Portuguese rural fire management. This included a mix of wildland fire management, rural civil protection, and forest/landscape management. In a country that is experiencing a rural exodus to urban and coastal areas, rural civil protection is a significant concern. In many locations, the land was simply abandoned, and flammable vegetation is expanding in the unmanaged landscape. Often, property ownership is unknown, a situation the Portuguese

government is addressing. Portugal, like other countries in southern Europe, is experiencing rapidly changing fire behavior not previously experienced. Attributed to climate change, a lack of traditional management of rural lands, and a buildup of flammable fuels, the resulting behavior includes an extended fire season, with increased fire intensity and severity. This not only impacts the landscape, but also threatens rural communities. Taken together, these factors create a complex problem set requiring an *integrated* response to meet ever-evolving challenges at various scales.

Portugal's national-level Agency for Integrated Rural Fire Management (AGIF) acted as my host. Established in 2019 after the country's 2017 severe wildland fires, AGIF is responsible for the planning, strategic coordination, and assessment of the recently developed Integrated Rural Fire Management System (SGIFR). Similar to the Fulbright Specialist's role in building connections, AGIF is designated to be the unifying and enabling authority that brings stakeholders together and guides them towards the same national goal. That is, to protect Portugal from severe rural fires.

The Fulbright project's objective was to understand SGIFR stakeholders' beliefs and attitudes toward critical wildland fire management topics. Over the course of the 32-day project, I spoke with 53 public and private sector stakeholders across Portugal. These interviews were centered on three SGIFR pilot projects located in the country's north, center, and south. During the project, I traveled from Chaves, in the far north on the Spanish border, to historic Coimbra in the center, and to Faro in the southern Algarve region. In turn, AGIF is using my findings to design a communication strategy and engagement initiatives with the main stakeholders, promoting SGIFR implementation.

### **APPLICABLE LESSONS**

As the project progressed, I identified several applicable lessons that may be of interest to other Fulbrighters. The first was the need to frame what I was doing within the scope of overall public policy processes. To do so, I needed to understand the status of rural fire management within the country. The past five years have been a time of notable institutional change and growth in Portugal's fire preparedness and response. The 2017 fire season's severity resulted in extensive property damage, the loss of over 100 lives, and systemic response failures. As a result, the government established two technical committees to complete a detailed process review. One recommendation resulted in the establishment of AGIF. At the same time, there has been some degree of organizational learning and adaptation within the country's larger fire management community.

Within the past two years, significant policy and legal actions occurred, reflecting a change in Portugal's governmental processes. The National Plan for Integrated Management of Rural Fires received approval in 2020, with the implementing National Action Program approved the following year. A subsequent component of the Program was the development of three pilot projects taking place from 2021 to 2023. My host agency was responsible for their coordination and implementation. Decree-Law 82/2021 (October, 2021) established the SGIFR in mainland Portugal and defines its operating rules. Finally, a new national government took office in March, 2022. This was a remarkable amount of political and policy activity within a two-year period. My project took place during this activity and it was essential for me to understand how it fit into the larger picture.

Another lesson was the importance of both understanding the relationship between various stakeholders or entities and establishing connections during this period of rapid change. This included me working with AGIF as well as the project's other Portuguese participants. Some stakeholders were candid in sharing that they didn't support the creation of AGIF and others were critical of the SGIFR developmental process. I felt that, to the extent possible, I had a potential role in opening a dialogue and contributing to the collaborative process among SGIFR stakeholders.

Existing, structural communication gaps are expected to emerge within and between organizations during the implementation of an innovative, national-level system such as the SGIFR. Several participants stressed that Portugal's governmental system was traditionally "stove piped," with limited sharing of information and collaboration. The new SGIFR was, in certain ways, a disruptive and radical departure from the norm. It was forcing changes in both the requirement for stakeholders to work together and the introduction of best practices. I looked at my role as contributing to "A Portuguese solution to a Portuguese challenge."

Recommendations at the conclusion of the project included an AGIF communication strategy that promotes interagency coordination. This strategy would highlight on-going activities at various governmental levels, such as at the region or sub-region, which encourage cooperation and trust among stakeholders. Specifically, this effort can focus on the sharing of data, knowledge, and expertise. Another proposal centered on a AGIF engagement activity. Two key stakeholders, the National Emergency and Civil Protection Agency and Liga Dos Bombeiros Portugueses both have a common interest in professional development of emergency managers and firefighters. In the proposed engagement activity, these stakeholders, facilitated by AGIF, would jointly craft an integrated training, certification, and professional development process. This would provide an initial "win-win" situation for the two organizations, building the foundation for future collaboration. It would also meet both organization's requirement for providing high quality, evidence-based training.

## PERSONAL INSIGHT IS INVALUABLE

Personally, the most significant lesson I learned was to never underestimate the knowledge and skills you bring to the project – not only professional and academic, but also the insight and familiarity one gains from general life experiences. This can assist when dealing with unexpected circumstances impacting the project. From various institutional perspectives, stakeholders discussed the critical relationship between rural socio-economic development and rural fire management, addressing the proven linkage between valuing a rural parcel and caring for it. These stakeholders stated that success in implementing the national plan is dependent on attracting people to live in, and properly manage, the country's rural landscape. This requires a whole of government approach dealing with viable rural economies, education, healthcare, public safety, and other key factors.

I didn't anticipate this conversation when preparing for my project. However, my personal experience helped me to grasp the issue's significance. My hometown in rural southwestern Colorado has a population of 1,400. Formerly economically dependent on coal mines and fruit orchards, the town recently saw a growth in organic agriculture and vineyards. However, not all residents benefit from this new economy. Like other small communities in rural regions, many people leave to seek better opportunities in larger metropolitan areas. Conceptually, I understood this unique aspect of the project and was comfortable discussing rural issues. In my summary to AGIF, I suggested that the issue of weak rural development could potentially put the national plan's success at risk. There is no quick, short-term solution to this challenge. To be successful, the Portuguese government must attempt to slow down or reverse decades of migration out of the country's rural interior. No single government agency holds all the answers. By law, AGIF participates in the design and integration of public policies that have an impact on rural fire management. At the national level, I suggested that AGIF propose a re-examination of policies and programs directed at rural socio-economic development. As Professor Fall observed, this requires a new way of thinking about a unique component contributing to successful rural fire management. In general, successful implementation of the national plan will require proposing creative and timely solutions to a complex challenge.

*Participating in the Fulbright Specialist program was an exceptional personal and professional experience. Without a doubt, it was a career highlight. I truly hope that the impact made by the project is equal to what I learned. As important, another role I see myself having as a Fulbrighter is to share what I learned. If the lessons from my project assist someone working within similar parameters in the future, then I consider that a success.*

## SHARING WITH OTHERS

Participating in the Fulbright Specialist program was an exceptional personal and professional experience. Without a doubt, it was a career highlight. I truly hope that the impact made by the project is equal to what I learned. As important, another role I see myself having as a Fulbrighter is to share what I learned. If the lessons from my project assist someone working within similar parameters in the future, then I consider that a success. I certainly didn't expect rural development to be identified as a critical component of successful rural fire management. Fulbrighters often conduct transdisciplinary projects in rapidly evolving, complex environments. Taking a step back, assessing new information, and clearly articulating a way forward is essential. As Professor Fall observed, a solution that works today can be obsolete by tomorrow.

## NOTES

1. Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Naval War College Review* 18, no. 3, art. 4 (1965): 17, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol18/iss3/4>.
2. "Mission," Agency for Integrated Rural Fire Management, assessed October 3, 2022, <https://www.agif.pt/en/about-agif/mission>.



Mike with project participant José Lima, *Comandante* of the Chaves, Portugal, volunteer firefighters (Photo used with the kind permission of *Comandante* Lima)

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**BIOGRAPHY**

Michael R. Czaja, PhD, is a retired US Army officer and holds an affiliate appointment at Colorado State University. Most recently, he served as a humanitarian assistance advisor to the military in the US Forest Service's Disaster Assistance Support Program. He currently is a Disaster Action Team volunteer with the American Red Cross' Kaiserslautern (Germany) US military community chapter. Mike holds a BA in Social Science from Saint Bonaventure University, a MS in International Relations from Troy University, and a PhD in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources from Colorado State University. In 2022, he completed a Fulbright Specialist project in Portugal. Mike can be reached at [mczajacrg@gmail.com](mailto:mczajacrg@gmail.com) or [michael.czaja@colostate.edu](mailto:michael.czaja@colostate.edu)

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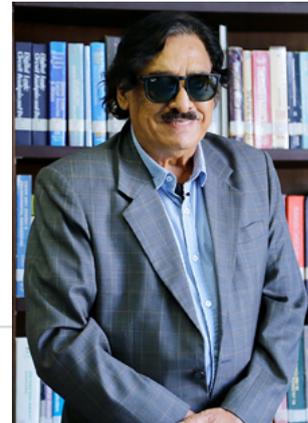
# ONLINE LEARNING IN THAILAND- MY FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCES

KULDEEP NAGI

## ABSTRACT

In 2006 I was posted as a Fulbright fellow to work in Thailand. My main goal was to help a prominent Catholic university (Assumption University) develop a robust online learning system. My early exposure and experiences with online learning with WebCT in Seattle, WA, helped me assist my host university with various aspects of digital learning. This article is a shortened version of articles that appeared in my book "Guru Vs. Google," published in December 2021.

**Keywords:** Covid • digitization • eLearning • Thailand



My academic career began in the 1980s in Seattle, Washington. This is where Microsoft was born. It was also the time when the internet was just introduced. I was in the right place at the right time to start working as a part-time Information Technology (IT) instructor. While working, I developed expertise in using computers, operating systems, software applications, and internet-related technologies for classroom teaching. After three years of struggle, I took a tenure track position to teach IT courses in Seattle Community College District. In the last two years of the 1980s, I witnessed Novell Netware, Linux, Apple, Microsoft, Netscape, and America Online slowly becoming part of the IT landscape. Schools, colleges, and universities were starting to invest in integrating computer networks and the internet for classroom teaching.

## PREPARING FOR FULBRIGHT AWARD

In the US, traditional distance learning started with postal, correspondence, and television courses. In the late 1980s, many universities in the US suddenly shifted to a new platform, the internet. While experimenting with various technologies, I came across Web Computer Tools (WebCT), developed at the University of British Columbia by a faculty member in computer science, Murray Goldberg. To continue his research, he built a system to ease the creation of a web-based learning environment. This led to the first version of the online teaching platform WebCT in early 1996. With WebCT, distance learning suddenly went on a new trajectory. My college became one of the first institutions to try this new platform. I was also one of the lucky faculty who was offered the opportunity as its regular user. After a few technical hassles, I started my journey with this new online learning platform. I was convinced that the new century starting in the year 2000, would usher in a new era to replace the century-old classroom teaching models.

Looking back, I can say that I had little interest in applying for a Fulbright Scholar Award. At that time, I was too busy at my college to give it a serious thought. I was also told that the faculty working in Community Colleges have a very slim chance of getting a Fulbright Award. One of my friends from Eastern Washington University in Pullman, WA, Dr. Mahalingam Iyer, a professor of Chemical Engineering, encouraged me to apply. In my application for the Fulbright fellowship, I highlighted my expertise and experiences with online learning and its various components. I am convinced that my early introduction to digital learning put me on track to receive a Fulbright Fellowship.

I am highly indebted to Nancy Verheyden, my department Dean, and Ron LaFayette, the President of NSCC, for their support. They approved my paid leave to represent Fulbright US in Thailand. After I was awarded a nine-month Fulbright Fellowship, Ms. Porntip. Kanjananiyot, the ex-Director of the Fulbright-Thai organization, visited my college in Seattle, WA. I am grateful to her for meeting with Nancy, Ron, and my other colleagues. After I arrived in Bangkok in 2006, she first placed me at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), a prominent regional center for higher education. Later she assigned me to Assumption University, where I started working with the College of Internet Distance Education (CIDE). My tasks involved helping CIDE design its online learning programs and courses.

### **THAILAND: MY EXPERIENCES AS A FULBRIGHTER**

For more than a century, Face-to-Face (F2F) teaching has been the hallmark of modern education in every country. In Thailand, the increasingly burdensome regulations imposed by state agencies have contributed to a compliance-oriented culture of F2F instruction. Most Thai schools, colleges, and universities take great pride in promoting traditional values, a strict dress code, classroom attendance, a one-size-fits-all curriculum, and exam standards. State agencies, such as the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), the operating body of the Higher Education Commission, and the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), are responsible for quality assurance. These two agencies and a few others have been accused of being more interested in forcing compliance rather than leading educational reforms. As a result, online learning has never been promoted or encouraged as an effective alternative to F2F teaching.

On my arrival in Bangkok in 2005, I came across a new open-source Learning Management System (LMS) called Moodle. Martin Dougiamas, who worked and studied at Curtin University, Australia, also had his first experience with WebCT, which prompted him to investigate an alternate online teaching platform. In 1999 he started the trial of his early prototypes of a new LMS called Moodle. I dissected several issues related to hosting online courses on this new platform. Starting in 2006, I published several articles on the Moodle platform, especially its various learning objects and

their functionality. In my research, I discovered that Thai students were not fully trained to take advantage of a virtual learning platform. It raised a few questions about whether Thai colleges and universities properly invest in training their faculty and students to use such innovative platforms. This is one of the major stumbling blocks for many institutions in Asia, especially in Thailand, where online learning has never been given a high priority.

Starting in 2019, the Covid pandemic forced the wholesale adoption of online learning at all levels of the Thai educational system. New learning models were initiated and labeled disruptive to the established norms and practices. With gradual ease in the pandemic in 2022, Thai institutions are now experimenting with “hybrid learning” that combines online learning and the old fashion classroom teaching to improve the overall experiences of students who have become quite comfortable with using portable devices and smartphones. Station Rotation, Flipped Classroom, and Lab Rotation are examples of hybrid models, and they are essential drivers that can enable more student-centered learning without overhauling the whole system. However, these hybrid models are what we call sustaining innovations; they improve the existing system along with the original performance measures rather than more disruptive ones that will use AI, VR, and cloud computing. These new trends are positioned to transform the classroom model and become engines of change over the longer term.

In a nutshell, flexibility has become the pinnacle of learning. The new digital learning models have many virtues. Thai students’ unique circumstances and needs will drive which model is the right fit for any school, college, or university. For example, blended or hybrid learning may or may not be the new educational paradigm of tomorrow, but addressing students’ needs now will help determine the best learning process for them. New models will help students move on with a flexible schedule according to their needs. During the pandemic, Thai teachers have been providing support and instruction on a flexible basis. At the same time, students have learned to work through coursework and tasks, giving them a high degree of control over their learning. Who wouldn’t want that for their students? As a result, policymakers think that a flex model is disruptive, meaning teachers and students make a clean break from the traditional system rampant in Thailand. Of course, this is not feasible for every school, college, or university. Without some stepping stones, the new disruptive models can be a difficult or tedious leap for many Thai students. Not all have the maturity, study skills, and resources to succeed online. Adopting such models in many parts of Asia, especially Thailand, will possibly reform education. Along with many other issues, the digital divide remains one of the most significant issues in Thailand.

## COVID PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN THAILAND

During the last three years of the pandemic, lots of experimentation has occurred in the Thai educational establishment. Classroom-based teaching is now being replaced by what is known as blended or hybrid learning, which is not the same as technology-driven learning. For quite some time, we have known that technology upholds traditional systems and structures in every type of learning environment. Technology has often been customized to meet the needs of F2F instruction. Blended or hybrid learning, by contrast, unlocks flexibility in time and space, enabling much greater customization of technology to suit individual student needs. It is supposed to allow learning from any place, at any time, at our own pace.

The last three years of the pandemic have proven to be an accelerator of many new trends. Every academic institution is now facing financial hardships. Students aggressively explore new learning opportunities to secure their financial futures in the post-pandemic era. They are now looking for fast, more engaging, and creative learning opportunities to address their skill gaps and career goals. As Thai schools, colleges and universities are changing to address the needs of their current and future students; they must ensure that their faculty is also prepared for the next frontier of teaching and learning. And they must also change at a pace on par with industry demands to ensure students are equipped to meet the present and future opportunities in the new job market.

For a long time, Thai academia has failed to evolve with new trends and technologies at the pace necessary to ensure the growth, sustainability, and vitality of the communities it serves. During the pandemic, the industry has also shown rapidly shifting market demands. It desperately needs higher education to step up and pivot its alignment with its needs. Failure to do so will only lead to fractured relationships between universities and employers. This is becoming a severe issue in ASEAN and many other countries. It is increasingly becoming clear that rather than depending on higher education to prepare its workforce, the industry is now eager to design its curriculum and completely ignore the traditional higher education structure. As a result, many institutions are looking to retool themselves for new digital learning platforms designed to engage, educate, and improve enrollment.

The pandemic has also exposed the follies of the old system of a one-size-fits-all approach to education. To design education for the new normal, Thai policymakers must concentrate their efforts on providing more resources for those disciplines that have more catching up. In general, hands-on education, lab work, and internships in a work environment have suffered the most from the restrictions caused by the pandemic. These restrictions are bound to ease. In the last three years, new digital learning trends have rapidly evolved to address the challenges and have created innovative teaching opportunities.

In Thailand, for digital learning to evolve or replace the traditional mode of “cram, jam, and pass the exam” will require a significant policy shift. In other words, Thai institutions must change their traditional approaches to assessing learning outcomes to meet the realities of the new virtual learning environments. They should think more deeply about offering students digital skills that will help them quickly get back to jobs. Suppose Thai students are struggling to remain enrolled in colleges and universities. In that case, institutions must do everything to provide resources and prepare them for new jobs in the post-Covid era.

It is very likely that after the pandemic, colleges and universities will not be able to return to the old model of delivery of F2F education. In the post-Covid era, teaching and learning will differ from what they used to be. As mentioned above, various new mixtures of on-campus F2F customized learning, remote learning, flipped classrooms, and hybrid or blended learning have emerged.

As countries continue to retool their workforce, many Thai institutions are now thinking creatively about how to customize learning. Offering micro-credentials, such as professional certificates and micro-credentials, has proven to be effective in streamlining education and addressing skill gaps. It is happening but rather very slowly. There are many examples of competency-based micro-credentialing launched by edX, IEEE, UDEMY, and many other organizations for providing adult learners with highly interactive career education related to small businesses, entrepreneurship, and information technology. This new trend is helping quickly retool the adults' employment opportunities in the new job market.

Strategies for post-Covid era education now include integrating hybrid learning, conferencing tools, and new technologies such as Zoom, Microsoft Team, Google Classroom, WebEx, Learning Management Systems, and portals, such as Khan Academy, MOOCs, edX, and Udemy.

In my experience as a Fulbrighter, there seem to be three potential approaches to addressing the quality of the Thai educational system. They are closely linked to institutional autonomy, English language proficiency, and the skills of the teachers. The growth and sustainability of every country now depend on new technology skills and the ability of the faculty to provide practical learning experiences for a new era. Teaching and learning have already ZOOMED out of the classrooms. Digital learning is on the

***In my experience as a Fulbrighter, there seem to be three potential approaches to addressing the quality of the Thai educational system. They are closely linked to institutional autonomy, English language proficiency, and the skills of the teachers. The growth and sustainability of every country now depend on new technology skills and the ability of the faculty to provide practical learning experiences for a new era.***

rise. Innovations in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, social media, conferencing tools, and other new trends will blur the lines between F2F and online learning. Thailand's educational system has a long way to go in integrating these new technologies and trends in its educational system.

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Rev. Brother Dr. Bancha Saenghiran, President of the Assumption University of Thailand, presiding over the signing ceremony and publication of my book "Guru Vs. Google," now available on Amazon.

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## BIOGRAPHY

Kuldeep Nagi is a researcher at Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand. He received his Fulbright Scholar Awards (2005-2006) in the US to lead his host university's efforts in developing a robust online learning alternative. He has been a speaker at MCT Global summit for the last three years and has participated in more than three dozen conferences. He is among the Top-10 Social Science Research Network (SSRN) authors. He can be contacted at [knagi@au.edu](mailto:knagi@au.edu)

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# WEAVING THREADS BETWEEN MUSIC AND SOCIAL EQUITY IN NEW YORK CITY

BRYDIE-LEIGH BARTLEET

## ABSTRACT

As a Fulbright Scholar at New York University, I undertook a program of research that explored how music and the arts are addressing complex social issues, such as social inequity, and bringing about positive change in communities. In this article I explore some of the insights generated from my Fulbright, by weaving threads between my experiences of music research, life, belonging, proximity, and action in the Big Apple.

**Keywords:** Arts • music • social equity



## THOUSANDS OF INVISIBLE THREADS

As I sat alongside hundreds of new Fulbrighters in the windowless ballroom of the QT Hotel in Canberra, the sense of connection and camaraderie was palpable. We were in this together and relished being in a space where we could openly share our collective excitement. It was February 2020, and we were due to fly out to the US in the coming months. We were floating on cloud nine, oblivious to the global catastrophe that was about to hit us all. We were warmly welcomed into the global Fulbright community and told that the links we were building now would last a lifetime.

My University's Vice Chancellor Professor Carolyn Evans, a former Fulbright Senior Scholar, was one of the guest speakers. Her words struck a particular chord with me. She said a Fulbright weaves "1000s of invisible threads." I have long been drawn to weaving and threading metaphors as a way of working through creative ideas and processes. I wrote those words down on the hotel notepad and carried them with me to New York City and back as a reminder. The weave of threads that Carolyn spoke of so aptly describes the connections that I made with colleagues and organizations, but also with life, culture, and ultimately myself in New York City.

## THREADS THROUGH MUSIC RESEARCH

I was originally due to go to New York University in 2020 to work with my host, Professor Barbara Hesser at New York University (NYU) on co-editing the 5th edition of *Music as a Global Resource Compendium* for the United Nation's (UN) 75th Anniversary. Instead, due to the pandemic, Barbara and I worked on the compendium virtually with the help of a team from NYU and

Griffith University, and we launched it in 2020 online (see Hesser & Bartleet, 2020). I was grateful to be able to make these connections, especially during such a challenging time, but I confess I did feel a tinge of disappointment that we couldn't launch it at the UN Headquarters as in previous years.

With the compendium under our belts, when I eventually made it to New York City in April 2022, Barbara and I had plenty of time to reflect on the unique global view of music our work had revealed. I learned so much from my time with her. She is not only a leading music therapist and trailblazer in her field, but also a wise and experienced champion of music across so many diverse contexts, including the UN.

My Fulbright also enriched my current Australian Research Council Future Fellowship research, which is examining the role music can play in addressing social inequity and bringing about positive change in communities. In line with the Fulbright ethos, soon after arriving in New York City, I quickly shifted my approach from one of data collection to connection. Rather than fronting up to musicians and organizations to extract ideas about my topic, I decided to focus on building relationships, and establishing foundations that would last longer than a one-time conversation.

This led me to meet with many leading musicians and arts organizations, attend their concerts and events, and have conversations with them about how they are using the arts to address a raft of pressing social issues. I also exchanged ideas around social justice-oriented practice, research, evaluation and impact with colleagues at a range of institutions and bodies, and shared what I was learning through keynote presentations, workshops, classes, and volunteering with social purpose NGOs, including a local food pantry in East Harlem. Through these experiences, 1000s of threads were formed not only between people, but also ideas, places and experiences.

## **T**HREADS OF LIFE

A major reason for choosing New York City was so that I could spend time with my host Barbara at NYU, but also because New York is home to a distinct cluster of renowned musicians, arts organizations and NGOs who have been driving innovative and creative practices in the field of social equity. This was my third visit to New York. The first time I visited was a few months after September 11, and the second time was a few months before Barack Obama was elected President. This time New York was coming to grips with the impact of the pandemic. There was a major surge in gun violence sparking the perennial debate about gun control laws. The Supreme Court reversed *Roe vs Wade*, settling off protests around reproductive rights, meanwhile Ketanji Brown Jackson made history as the first African American woman to be sworn in as a Supreme Court Justice. Inflation kept surging, and the political divisions continued to rage as the January 6th Hearings commenced.

For my family, coming to understand and connect with New York City meant getting out every day, walking the streets, riding the subway, and engaging with as many arts, culture, and food experiences as we could. Highlights included seeing 90-year-old John Williams conduct his music at Carnegie Hall; witnessing the closing night of Australian composer Brett Dean's opera *Hamlet* at the Met; cheering on the Knicks at the Garden; dancing at the free summer stages; sitting on FDR Drive with 10,000's of New Yorkers watching the Macy's fireworks on the 4th July; visiting Broadway; visiting Positive Exposure an NGO using photography to change the way we see disability; visiting the deeply moving Jean-Michel Basquiat *King Pleasure* exhibition; playing my trumpet as part of *Taps Across America* on Memorial Day (pictured above); and so much more. These experiences lit my husband, my twin daughters, and myself up creatively. However, it was not just the constant excitement of these events that made the deepest impression. It was the day-to-day reality of living in New York City, and calling it temporarily our home. Family life continued, our kids were typical tweens, and we shopped every couple of days at our local Key Foods grocer.

### **THREADS OF BELONGING**

Spending time in New York City prompted me to reflect deeply on my own migrant story alongside my research topic. I was deeply moved by a visit to the famed Tenement Museum, where I imagined the experiences of countless migrant families, traipsing up and down these wrought-iron stairs. Culturally separated from where they came from, yet culturally nourished by the small yet significant practices they did each day to remind themselves of who they really are. We heard stories of how many were undocumented, working in exploitative conditions, and at the mercy of their fears. Inequities and injustices seemed to abound as they broke their backs to remain above the poverty line. So many threads severed on one end, yet threaded into a new weave on the other. Because such a large part of New York's population is riddled with this transience and displacement, I found questions of belonging were ever-present. Not just culturally, but socially, economically, and politically.

These experiences made me wonder how these complex questions of belonging relate to broader conceptualizations of community, and how then these experiences relate to more macro issues of social equity. It inspired me to explore ways in which the arts carve out a space for exploring how these individual experiences might connect to systemic forces and factors that can shift inequities like those experienced by New York's early migrants in the Tenements. I found powerful examples in the Ford Foundation Centre for Social Justice's exhibition 'Everything Slackens in a Wreck.' This exhibition of new works reflects on Asian migration to the Americas in the 19th century and tells the story of over half a million indentured workers who were taken

to plantations as replacement labor following the abolition of slavery. The art works allowed us to see and hear truths about these inequities (past and present), but also told stories of how the artists have created a sense of belonging through their work.

It was not just in the silent rooms of an art gallery, hidden from the street view, that I saw this search for a sense of belonging. In New York City, we experienced a constant public showing, rehearsing, and sharing of cultural identities, and a public thinking through how these have shaped and been shaped by American culture. A memorable example was when we joined thousands of New Yorkers in celebrating the inaugural Japan Parade for Japan Day down Central Park West. Eighty community organizations marched in a colorful display of Japanese culture in America with singing, dancing, Taiko, Gagaku, Kendo, Karate, marching bands, celebrating 150 years of Japan-US relations. Because everything in New York City is so compressed, you cannot ignore these expressions. However, I came to wonder whether this proximity actually changed anything in terms of broader social equity.

### THREADS IN PROXIMITY

When I was in the Tenement Museum shop, I picked up a book, *Tales of Two Cities: Stories of Inequality in a Divided New York* (Freeman, 2015). I was struck by the cover, an image so quintessentially New York City of a homeless person lying outside an exclusive Manhattan store. It led me to wonder what kind of an impact this proximity has on how people see each other in this city. This was not a theoretical question, as we were living this every day in the city. While technically on the Upper East Side, and a short walk away from mind-blowing privilege, our E97th Street apartment was placed at the intersection of the famed Mt Sinai hospital on one corner, a daytime strip for our homeless neighbors on another, the Islamic Cultural Centre of New York Mosque on the other, and 'Projects' (social housing blocks) and a church and childcare on the other. Experiencing the proximity of extreme privilege and poverty was part of our daily experience.

When I met a colleague from Boston University, Professor André De Quadros and discussed this, he made the point that we need to think beyond proximity, to spaces where people actually engage in dialogue and relationships. In other words, we connect the individual to the community, and transform proximity into a more liminal space that promotes reflection and connection. I experienced what he meant during an online session he hosted for the Race, Prison, Justice Arts project he has been running for many years for incarcerated artists. There was a powerful energy in the room with over 80 people on the line, some of whom are incarcerated, their family members, and leaders from Boston University's Prison Arts Project. We listened to a collect call from one of the incarcerated artists, Truth, as he shared a poem entitled "Ruminations of a Rogue Prophet." This came from *Explanations from Exile*, a literary initiative he started at the prison in 2016, as

a truth-telling process that is part of restorative justice programming. This dialogic space went well beyond proximity. Truth's work opened up a space to speak to the systems of power. I was struck by how these spaces created by the arts can allow us to play with, rehearse, engage, and have dialogues about more equitable relations. Spaces to re-story lives, open up pathways to different futures, and to listen to and be heard by others, including decision-makers who pull the policy strings.

### THREADS OF ACTION

One of the highlights of my Fulbright was meeting NYU Professor Steve Duncombe. He has a long history of practice and research in my field, having co-founded the Centre for Artistic Activism. When I described my research to Steve, he immediately identified that I am not just looking at how music and the arts can lead to outcomes like individual self-determination, community building and social cohesion. Rather, I am looking at how those outcomes might flow up to a systemic level, and bring about a more equitable world. For him, in order to do this, we have to be clear about our intent, and how we really know if we have achieved this intent (see Duncombe & Lambert, 2021).

Steve's ideas about intention in artistic activism resonated with another memorable experience during my Fulbright. We attended the Tribeca Film Festival where Robert De Niro presented the rap artist Common with the Harry Belafonte Voices for Social Justice Award. An Academy Award, Emmy and Grammy-winning artist and activist, Common has been deeply engaged in social justice and advocacy work around mass incarceration, mental health and voting.

What was so powerful to hear in Common's story is that he has found a way to come to know his intentions, to find a sense of belonging. Through hard work and reflection, he is creating a dialogic space to be with others that goes well beyond mere proximity. He is using rap as a way of not only telling truths of people impacted by an unjust justice system, but re-writing stories and lives with a focus on hope. However, he also understands that the racial inequities he is seeking to address are operating on the systemic level, and through his NGOs he is taking action hand-in-hand with politicians, policy-makers, decision-makers, and community leaders to address these macro issues.

His art is allowing him to weave threads through those dimensions from the individual to the community to the social, and back again.

***This rich tapestry of experiences (1000s of invisible threads) collectively wove together to provide the greatest learning experience of my career so far. The threads of these experiences allowed me to see connections between the personal and the social, the micro and the macro, and how the arts and culture can create powerful pathways for moving between these perspectives.***

## A RICH TAPESTRY IN THE MAKING

This rich tapestry of experiences (1000s of invisible threads) collectively wove together to provide the greatest learning experience of my career so far. The threads of these experiences allowed me to see connections between the personal and the social, the micro and the macro, and how the arts and culture can create powerful pathways for moving between these perspectives. This is so vital in a topic area such as mine, where I am trying to understand how the deeply personal experience of making music, so often thought about in individual and community terms, can also flow upstream to address issues such as social inequity on a systemic level. This is a weave that is still in the making, but is all the richer thanks to this once-in-a-lifetime Fulbright experience.

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Professor Bartleet, her Fulbright host Professor Barbara Hesser, and Professor Peter Jampel after a music therapy class at NYU.

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**BIOGRAPHY**

Brydie-Leigh Bartleet is a Professor and Australian Research Council Future Fellow at the Creative Arts Research Institute, Griffith University (Australia). She was a Fulbright Scholar at NYU from 5 April – 5 July 2022 (awarded 2020). Over the past 20 years, her work has advanced our understanding of the cultural, social, economic, and educational benefits of music and the arts in First Nations' Communities, prisons, war affected cities, educational and industry contexts. She can be contacted at [b.bartleet@griffith.edu.au](mailto:b.bartleet@griffith.edu.au)

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# MY FULBRIGHT AWARD HELPED ME TO UNCOVER THE PAST AND DISCOVER MY FUTURE

MARX NAVARRO-CASTILLO

## ABSTRACT

The author, passionate about archaeology and the development of his birthplace Chiapas in Mexico, was granted the Fulbright-García Robles scholarship to pursue his graduate studies at SUNY-Albany. This accomplishment allowed him to not only contribute to the field of study of his interest, archaeology, but also to contribute to alleviating the great educational backlog in Chiapas. His academic research has also focused on revitalizing the past of the indigenous populations historically forgotten in Mexico.

**Keywords:** Mesoamerica • ethnoarchaeology • cultural heritage



The year 2006 was undoubtedly one of the most important years of my life. Even though the process to apply for the Fulbright-García Robles scholarships begins a year in advance it was in 2006 when I was awarded the scholarship that provided the needed funding so I could pursue my master's degree in the United States.

Certainly, the selection process for the universities, where candidates like me end up attending, is rigorously done by the evaluation committee and in the end the best option for me was SUNY-Albany. Some people say that “there is no such thing as coincidence; it is god winking down upon you”. Dr. John Justeson, whom I have admired since I was an undergraduate in Xalapa Veracruz, Mexico was teaching at Albany, and I was very pleased to have been mentored, and much later befriended by him. Likewise, I was fortunate to have begun my studies the same year Dr. Robert Rosenswig began teaching at Albany. He became my advisor and due to his extensive research in the Soconusco, I was able to continue my studies and research near my birthplace in Chiapas. This was a rare possibility because there are so few researchers focused on that region, in spite of its historical importance as the location for some of the very first complex societies in Mesoamerica. It is amusing and at the same time tragic to remember a time where Dr. Rosenswig and I were driving in a van and realized that all the archaeologists actively researching in the Soconusco could easily fit in that car with space to spare. The lack of large pyramids, and the absence of the Maya culture, predominant in Chiapas often results in a dearth of interested researchers, especially Mexicans, to the point that I am the only active Mexican archaeologist working regularly in this region since 2011.

## **WHEN IN ROME DO AS THE ROMANS DO**

SUNY's Anthropology Department is known for faculty work in both Mesoamerica and in other regions of the world. Thanks to my classes on the American Northeast, I had the opportunity to work at the New York State Museum (NYSM), one of the most rewarding work experiences I have ever had. This job not only allowed me to meet many people and travel places all over New York State, but to practice a different kind of archaeological research. A contrasting difference between working in the American Northeast and in Mesoamerica was the type of archaeological excavations. The techniques employed in the museum as a first approach were Shovel Test Pits (STP) and this is not a common excavation practice in Mesoamerica. In fact, I personally had never done one in my life until I worked at the NYSM and by that time I had been doing archaeological work for more than 8 years. For me, learning new techniques was very enriching. The most peculiar anecdote I had was to see the excitement that my fellow specialists in the region got whenever they found a piece of pottery, and I even thought that they were joking with me, since generally, in Mesoamerica we find thousands of pieces of pottery even on the surface, even without the need to excavate. A colleague of mine regularly jokes that Mesoamerican Archaeologists would not know a site unless they could trip on it, whereas they have to do the real work in the Northeast. Untrue, but funny anyway.

While there were contrasts with the work I was involved on my previous experiences in Mesoamerica, some similarities existed as well. Regardless of the cultural differences between Americans and Mexicans, people have very similar ideas about the nature of an archaeologist's work, because in both places, when I encountered the public interested in archaeology, I was asked if I was searching for gold or if any dinosaur bones had already been found, those are typical questions people ask us every time we are working.

Undoubtedly, academics and work more than compensated for many of the hardships I experienced at the beginning of my stay in Albany. I am from a city named Tapachula, Mexico located on the border with Guatemala. The weather is divided into two seasons, hot and very hot, the winter here does not go below 25° Celsius (77° Fahrenheit) whereas in Albany the temperatures in the winter were as low as -30 Celsius (-22 Fahrenheit). There were times when I thought Narnia was a tropical paradise compared to Albany. The weather was not all misery, as it allowed me to enjoy the snow, and to witness Christmas holidays as portrayed in the movies I used to watch when I was a child.

## **IMPLEMENTING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED**

My parents were elementary and high school teachers, and they knew that education was especially important in a state like ours, since 14% of the population is illiterate and barely 13% of the population completes a university degree. This academic and economic precariousness motivated me to return

to my home state once I concluded my doctoral studies at SUNY. The tools I learned during my stay as a Master's student thanks to the Fulbright-García Robles Scholarship and my subsequent acceptance into the doctoral program at SUNY-Albany provided me with the necessary skills to develop projects which have been important not only for the Academy but also for mentoring students to enable them to reach their goals as I have achieved mine.

Back in Mexico I had the opportunity to work in the community of Nueva Palestina, an ethnically diverse village formed by Tsotsiles, Tseltales and Choles (groups of indigenous maya people). Conditions are really difficult, internet access is very limited and mobile phone signal is non-existent. It was common to be without power the majority of the days of the week. Despite the logistical difficulties, I was able to carry out an archaeological research project called "Rancho Ojo de Agua in the Periphery of Classic Maya Centers" (RODA). This project allowed us to recognize the cultural practices of both ancient and contemporary inhabitants of the region. This research project had an ethnoarchaeological approach where we observed many religious and cultural practices were shared between the current populations and those who inhabited the place more than 1000 years ago. As agriculturalists, it was evident that they still revere bodies of water for their crops and for life itself. However, this practice had not been documented in this region, and it makes us proud to have been the first researchers that did.

Along with the theoretical and methodological tools learned during my scholarship as a Fulbright grantee at SUNY-Albany, I also benefited from personal relationships. With the support of two of my fellow doctoral students were able to carry out the first systematic underwater archaeological survey in Chiapas's history. With the participation of my colleagues Dr. Justin Lowry and Dr. Jason Paling who contributed to the underwater component of RODA, it was possible to obtain more evidence on the religious practices of the ancient Maya related to water bodies, lakes and lagoons in the region of the Lacanhá River Basin. We knew about this link from research into the Cenotes of the Yucatan Peninsula, since Edward Thompson's incipient work of dredging the Chichen Itza cenote at early twentieth century. The RODA underwater component has undoubtedly yielded many achievements in terms of this gap of knowledge that existed about the Mayas (ancient and modern) that inhabit the Lacanhá River Basin.

Additional to this research work conducted within the Lacandon Jungle, I also have focused my interest in the area known as Soconusco. This study gave me the opportunity to work with two of my mentors, Dr. Robert Rosenswig and Dr. Hector Neff. They have been an important part of my academic formation, as well as my advisor during my undergraduate studies at University of Veracruz, Sara Ladrón de Guevara. Dr. Robert Rosenswig was my advisor and was always supportive during the development of my thesis work. He always provided examples and recommendations to encourage me to move forward. Without him I would not have been able

to finish my dissertation and I thank him his constant support. I met Dr. Hector Neff through the Izapa Regional Reconnaissance project (PRRI) directed by Dr. Rosenswig. Although I was not his student because he works at California State University, his mentoring in the field and his confidence in me to become Co-Director of the Soconusco Coast Archaeological Project (PACS) has been invaluable. Both PACS and PRRI are projects that employ important technological instruments which have been key in the last few years, such as LiDar. Especially in ecological environments such as those of Soconusco, which have dense vegetation where neither satellite images nor aerial photography are useful in the identification of archaeological remains, it is essential to use LiDar for excellent logistical planning. With those images it is possible to identify the existence of archaeological mounds, avoiding the need to physically examine 100 percent of the surface, saving a lot of time.

PACS has also used magnetometer and ground penetrating radar, very useful at the time of excavation, since those pieces of equipment allowed us to identify the anomalies in the subsoil, thereby reducing the uncertainty of excavation. In this way we were successful in identifying a burial dated around 772-955 AD ca, and also areas of ceramic production.

This information gathered has been important for research about the pre-Hispanic craft specialists in the Soconusco mangrove zone. Of particular interest to me has been the Classic period, a time when the ceramic type known as Plumbate was developed, a ceramic type that had a wide dispersion throughout Mesoamerica and beyond its borders, since it has been found as far as the state of Jalisco, and in Costa Rica. Dr. Neff already developed and defined the region where it was produced, yet it was not until the development of this project that the specific areas where the production of such a valued ceramic type occurred were specifically identified.

Furthermore, the study of the ancient ceramic production, PACS has conducted a systematic and diachronic study of ancient populations that settled on the Soconusco coast, from the Middle and Late Holocene to the present time. There have been inhabitants in this region continuously. In spite of being a region that does not have great stone constructions or sculptures as wonderful as in the Mayan area, it has grabbed the attention of public audiences, so much so that in 2019 we appeared on Mexican national television, discussing our project and findings, an important achievement since the work done was well appreciated.

Both projects RODA and PACS have a wide academic impact, as well as being accompanied by students from both Mexico and the United States. It is particularly interesting to tell the story of my students Lucinda and Guadalupe. In spite of all the difficulties they faced, they were able to achieve much through these projects. Lucinda was able to get into a Master's program at the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, one of the oldest universities in the Americas. In addition, Guadalupe obtained a scholarship from the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) awarded

to indigenous women, and subsequently enrolled in the Master's program of the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología (CIESAS). For me, this was amazing to see such success from a student who had overcome so much.

### **I'VE GOT A FEELING WE'RE NOT IN ALBANY ANYMORE**

Overall, I have contributed to the academic life of my state, and also participated in its social development, as these projects have employed dozens of people who supported us in the logistics of our work. Without them it would have been impossible to do our work. Both of the archaeological projects have reached out to people not only as employment, but as a way to understand their own heritage. People who learn of our work in Soconusco are empowered and proud of their place, their heritage and their culture. We do not give them this, but they find it for themselves in the conclusions about their own ancestors they help to uncover in our shared work. This is important because, within Mexico, these are socially forgotten populations, one mainly because they are indigenous and the other because they are located on the border, where they are far from popular and academic attention. It has been a difficult job due to some of the adverse conditions we have faced, but we continued the important work. Even in spite of the fact that on more than one occasion, coworkers at my former university at Chiapas, told me that I had to realize that I was not in Albany anymore. For moments I felt like I was in that iconic fragment of the Wizard of Oz, where Dorothy says: "Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." That mindset, I am aware, has Chiapas mired in low educational quality relative to the rest of the country. However, I have strived to excellence in my work and mentorship because it is what I have learned from my parents, sister and wife and that was strengthened by what I got from my Fulbright at SUNY-Albany.

*The purpose of the Fulbright-García Robles scholarship is to strengthen the ties between Mexico and the US. I believe I have accomplished some of that goal, as projects I work on have involved researchers from both countries. I keep constant collegial relationships with archaeologists from all over the world, but especially the US. Above all, it is not only bonds of research, and teaching, but also friendship which will irrevocably change the trajectory of my life and work we all do together.*

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## NOTES

1. To find out more about the author's effort on diffusion archaeological themes, you may access the videos of the program Bitácora Arqueológica (Archaeological Log), which was broadcasted for more than a year in a local radio station in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico (<https://www.facebook.com/Bit%C3%A1cora-Arqueol%C3%B3gica-228530421152294>).
2. Likewise, via this link you will be able to access the television interview, broadcasted nationally in Mexico (<https://www.facebook.com/marx.n.castillo/videos/10157750435690752>).
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Marx Navarro-Castillo having a friendly meeting with the inhabitants of Sibal in Ocosingo, Chiapas, Mexico

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Marx Navarro-Castillo is an archaeologist and obtained his PhD in Anthropology in 2014. He was a Fulbright-García Robles grantee for graduate studies from 2006-2008. In 2015 he was repatriated by CONACYT. Currently he is the Co-Director of the Costa del Soconusco Archaeological Project and Director of the Rancho Ojo de Agua Project. He currently works at Universidad Intercultural de Campeche. He can be contacted at [marxnavc@yahoo.com](mailto:marxnavc@yahoo.com)

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# THE IMPACT OF THE FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCE ON A COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATOR: TWENTY YEARS LATER

DAVID J. SMITH

## ABSTRACT

The author shares his experiences in navigating the Fulbright US Scholar Program process and the impact that the experience had on his family and himself. Coming from a community college, he represents a minority of grantees, even though community colleges educate over 40% of US undergraduates. He shares how the experience impacted his career choices, provided him with an opportunity to support global education in community colleges, and brought his passion for advancing peacebuilding to fruition.

**Keywords:** community college • peacebuilding • global education



## COMING TO THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

In 2002, I had been teaching full-time at Harford Community College in northeast Maryland for nearly eight years. Community colleges, sometimes called junior colleges, play a significant role in American higher education. While universities and liberal arts colleges focus on matriculating students to bachelor's degrees, community colleges offer associate degrees and other work-related credentials. They provide students, who are less interested in traditional liberal arts areas, with opportunities to build skill sets that allow them immediate employment. In addition, they are less expensive and generally have few admission criteria except graduation from high school. For these reasons, these institutions are often referred to as “democracy's colleges.”

One typical community college discipline is paralegal studies, where students are trained to work as assistants to lawyers. I used to direct such a program. Teaching was my passion but not my first career. After law school, I practiced law for several years, which was meaningful, but it did not compare to my love of the classroom. Therefore, I started teaching part-time and eventually made it a full-time career.

My second passion was peace. As an attorney, I had been trained in mediation and conflict resolution and incorporated these into the work. Because my practice included family issues such as divorce and custody, mediation was necessary for peaceful approaches to domestic conflict. For example, sitting down with a skilled and empathic mediator was better than battling it out in court over the custody of children.

At my college, I developed conflict-focused courses for the local community and students. At the time, very few community college professors were teaching conflict resolution, a part of the growing field of peacebuilding. Though these courses provided me with new opportunities with students, I felt that I was not reaching my full potential. The colleagues were smart, supportive, and dedicated to their work. However, intercultural and global education – a cornerstone of peacebuilding work – was not easily supported in the county I was working, which was overwhelmingly white, politically conservative, and parochial.

My wife and I come from global roots. My mother is French Canadian. She had immigrated to the US and married my father, a native Baltimorean of mostly English and Irish descent. My wife's parents are more diverse. Her father came from India on a Guggenheim Fellowship in the early 1960s to advance his dental education, and her mother's family immigrated from Germany to New York City in the 1950s. Both families represent global, progressive, and intercultural values that we want to pass on to our biological son and adopted Korean daughter. We believed that living abroad would be the goal and that my career would be the means to bring this about.

I spent time online looking at many exchange programs, none of which seemed to fit my situation until my father-in-law recommended the Fulbright Program. After some research, I recognized that few community college faculty received Fulbright awards. At about the same time, I learned about an exchange program between the Maryland National Guard and the Estonian government. Not being Estonian or knowing any Estonians, it seemed to have little relevance to my plans. Nevertheless, a colleague had participated in the program and spoke positively of his experience. Nothing prevented me from applying for a grant to give a few lectures in Estonia and help strengthen its ties with Maryland. As an attorney, I suggested in my application that I could discuss the US legal system and share my work in conflict, which was no stranger to this Baltic nation that had left the Soviet Union a decade ago. I was accepted into the program. Indeed, my goals in visiting Estonia were not only to achieve this specific grant's ends, but to see if I could obtain an invitation for a Fulbright award, which would be helpful in an application. Moreover, it would be a good move to visit the country to allay our reservations about living there with our children, including concerns about schooling.

The grant took me to the University of Tartu, in Estonia's second-largest city. Tartu is the country's academic heart and, some would say, its cultural center, in that the capital Tallinn is thought of as more Russian than Estonian in many ways. I was introduced to faculty in the political science program and law school. I made a pitch to teach a course in alternative dispute resolution in law school, and peace studies: an interdisciplinary field looking at the causes of conflict and violence and approaches to solutions to undergraduates. Both efforts resulted in letters of invitation to include in my Fulbright application. I also discussed my work with faculty and students and strengthened links with Maryland and my college.

The process of putting together the application for the Fulbright US Scholar Program was time consuming, with course proposals, personal and professional endorsements, ideas on how to advance my experiences upon return, and letters of recommendation. I was grateful to obtain strong recommendations, especially from one colleague who had been a mentor and is still a close friend. Finally, I submitted the application in the summer 2002, and the waiting game began.

In April 2003, I received the letter of award. Though my wife and I had theoretically considered how we might plan, now it was for real. We had much to do. Unfortunately, my college became an obstacle as the administration was unfamiliar with the Fulbright award. I had applied for a sabbatical, but it had yet to be approved. I had a Fulbright grant, but with no sabbatical salary. We could not afford to accept the award as the Fulbright stipend was insufficient in itself. The academic vice president opposed my sabbatical application. Looking back, the reason had less to do with me than campus politics. However, things worked out in the end. My colleagues went to bat for me, as did members of our college board of trustees, and with the final decision resting with the college president, I was hoping for the best. Though I had disagreements with the president— especially when I served as the faculty chair — she recognized the value of international education and overruled the academic vice president. My Fulbright grant and sabbatical would be for fall 2003 and I would return to the college in spring 2004. In the meantime, adjuncts could cover my teaching obligations. Our planning now centered on moving to Estonia.

## **ESTONIA**

During my first Estonia visit, I met with officials at a newly founded international school in Tartu, which reassured me that our children's education would be in good hands. Further planning followed, like housing (we assumed a lease from a previous Fulbright grantee), identifying the classes I would teach, and tackling the complexities of living abroad for six months. We decided to fly to Paris in July and drive to Estonia, passing through northern Europe and Scandinavia. It was an excellent adventure for all of us, including a visit to Legoland in Denmark and taking several ferries. Having not traveled

to northern Europe before, the experience gave me a better appreciation of cultural differences that contrasted with my own. For example, learning about the reserved approach to individual engagement, which is more common in Nordic countries, helped me when I first met Estonians, who are quintessentially reticent.

Living in Estonia was a seminal experience for us as a family. Our son, nine at the time, lived in a city where he was free to roam, explore, and make friends. Our daughter, four, went to a kindergarten where she learned more Estonian than the rest of us. My wife, a registered nurse, gave a lecture on American nursing practices, spent time with new friends, and managed our children's activities. Community college faculty often teach five three-credit courses per semester. However, during my Fulbright grant, I taught only two classes: one in the political science department on peace studies and one in law school on conflict resolution. Not having a heavy workload enabled me to write more and give additional lectures, including one at Uppsala University in Sweden.

My Fulbright experience coincided with a critical period in Estonia. A referendum took place to decide whether Estonia should join the European Union (EU) and the majority voted in favor of joining. Posters in support argued that Estonians should vote "jah" (yes) to bring about more prosperity. Those arguing for "ei" (no) implied that Estonia would be again taken over by outsiders (alluding to the Nazi and Soviet occupations). My students were excited about the prospects of being part of a new Europe and having the chance to look west rather than east for their futures. I wrote an op-ed in the *International Herald Tribune* commenting on my students' reactions to joining the European Union.

## TEACHING

My students were remarkably proficient in English. I taught both courses in English. Few Estonian speaking students learned Russian, unlike their parents, who had been forced to do it (I was struck by the fact that Estonian and Russian speaking students often communicated to each other in English). It was all about being European for them. I also had students in the Erasmus program hailing from European countries and showing their local peers the excitement of future possibilities. Just the same, Estonians have continued to be fearful of Russian intentions. Considering the current war in Ukraine and threats to the Baltic countries, few can argue they are wrong.

I recall that students in both classes were eager to engage with Americans, particularly in the post-9/11 world. In March 2003, the US invaded Iraq on the pretext that there were weapons of mass destruction in the country. When I was in Tartu, many people, both in the US and internationally, were questioning the justification for the invasion. My students – especially those participating in the Erasmus exchange program – were politically astute and

not afraid to question what was happening. I was the only American they knew. As such, class conversations often ventured into American foreign and military policy issues. Though I had objections to the invasion, I sometimes felt I needed to defend American policy. I wonder if this is a phenomenon that many Fulbright grantees feel overseas: they are there to learn about the host country but also to advance American interests. Many grantees might find this latter goal a bit reprehensible, but the reality is that the Fulbright Program (funded by the US government) is a tool of soft diplomacy. With my students, it was often difficult to negotiate these discussions, trying to share American national interests while voicing my reservations. It was an uncomfortable place to be. However, it was indeed an appropriate discussion in a peace studies class.

My alternative dispute resolution class consisted of native Estonian and native Russian speakers. It is important to remember that Estonia has a sizable Russian speaking minority estimated at about 25%. Because of the nature of the subject matter, this class was designed as experiential based. That is, we spent much of class engaged in role-plays. Not knowing much about Estonian society before arriving, I had designed exercises based on common American situations. It proved instructive both to me and my students at times. For instance, one exercise was about contacting law enforcement due to a neighbor's loud noise. This would be something that would naturally happen in the US. However, my students pointed out that Estonians would not do that, and they would suffer in silence before calling the police. They shared that such behavior was inherited from the Soviet period when calling the police might make you a target of others: a snitch, if you will, and possibly result in unfortunate personal consequences. During the height of the Soviet era, one did not know whom to trust.

I was also struck by the lack of trust between Estonian and Russian speaking students. The Russians felt that they were marginalized in society and denied opportunities in government, business, and education. They felt Estonians were, at times, holding grudges against them. An example was the existence of "occupation museums" in the Baltics, which depicted the horrors of Soviet oppression of native populations. The Russian speaking students believed they were unfairly blamed for past actions.

### **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IMPACT**

Senator J. William Fulbright argued that a primary benefit of the Fulbright Program would be enhancing peaceful relations between countries. It was not lost on me that I was teaching specifically about promoting peace and advancing conflict resolution, and as such, hopefully offering skills and knowledge to students as they navigated between competitive geopolitical forces. The Fulbright experience in Estonia further confirmed my desire to advance peacebuilding, leading me to continue to teach and write on the subject.

Upon my return, I hoped to continue advancing global education with colleagues, students, and the community. I offered lectures on my experience and made some course changes. Providing a tutorial on Estonia and its history was valuable for the students with little global orientation. I was full of ideas on developing new courses, a global curriculum, and creating study abroad opportunities. I needed the administration's support to accomplish these goals, but this help did not materialize. The campus climate at the time was very divisive. I was frustrated and, after about a year, I determined that I should be elsewhere. It was a difficult decision because I had received tenure, served in faculty leadership, and made close friends there. A colleague told me that I had now acquired the "brass ring" and should have enjoyed the protection. However, I was not sure that this ring was what I now needed.

I found a position at the US Institute of Peace (USIP) – a federally supported think tank that advances global conflict resolution efforts – that seemed to fit my qualifications (a few years earlier, I had participated in a program at the Institute). The position was a reach, though: I was not globally or DC connected and did not have a prestigious academic pedigree. Yet, the Fulbright award set me apart. Estonia experience had given me a broader and culturally infused notion of conflict and peacebuilding, something that was valued at USIP. I applied in early 2005 and, like all government jobs, the process was long, with several interviews. I was not hopeful, and became anxious about my career as the end of the academic year approached. On June 14, the day before my academic contract would expire, I was offered the position. I resigned from my college the next day. To say that my colleagues were shocked could be an understatement.

I left USIP in late 2012 and have since pursued my interests. In 2015, I formed a not-for-profit focusing on humanitarian education training for graduate students. This work has given me considerable satisfaction. Recognizing that many young people seek careers pursuing the greater good, I wrote a book (2016) for youth on careers in peacebuilding, which followed an earlier one on peacebuilding in community colleges. I also have collaborated with community colleges through an annual seminar on peacebuilding for educators, published widely on advancing global education in community colleges, served as president of the Washington, DC chapter of the Fulbright Association, and taught graduate level courses at George Mason University, Drexel University, and American University. I believe my Fulbright award made all of this possible.

### **IMPACT ON MY FAMILY**

Fulbright's impact on my family has been great. We moved to the Washington, DC area in 2005. In the ensuing years, my children developed a keen global perspective with diverse and international friends, and we continued to travel globally as a family. Our son worked in China for a summer and studied in Turkey for a semester while he was in college. Following

graduation, he served as a US Peace Corps volunteer in Namibia, teaching mathematics to middle school students. He has traveled the world and now works for the Environmental Protection Agency. Our daughter studied in Korea, her birth country, during her college years. She has also been a world traveler and embraced global values – now a second-grade teacher. My wife continued working as a nurse. Having fallen in love with the classroom atmosphere, like me, she is now teaching nursing full-time at Montgomery College, a community college in Maryland. She is a strong proponent of global education and has taken her nursing students to the Dominican Republic on a study trip. I would like to think their time in Estonia influenced my children's and wife's choices.

For me the impact of participating in the Fulbright Program was immeasurable. First, the Fulbright Program offered me a chance to broaden my thinking and consider the possibilities of the good I could do in the world. As a community college professor, I had the opportunity to bring global insight to my students and advance community colleges' important roles in cultural and global awareness. Finally, it allowed me to actualize working for peace. After twenty years, I am grateful for these opportunities. It has made me the person I am today.

***The Fulbright Program offered me a chance to broaden my thinking and consider the possibilities of the good I could do in the world. As a community college professor, it offered me the chance to bring global insight to my students and advance the important role that community colleges have in cultural and global awareness. The Fulbright Program allowed me to actualize working for peace. After 20 years, I am grateful for the opportunities that it offered me. It has made me the person I am today.***

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1. Smith, David J. "Estonian Vote: Goodbye Russia, Hello Europe." *International Herald Tribune*, October 2, 2003.
2. The annual program for community college faculty on peacebuilding is at <https://www.foragecenter.org/2022seminar>.
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Arrival in Tartu, Estonia, in August 2003 at Tartu International School

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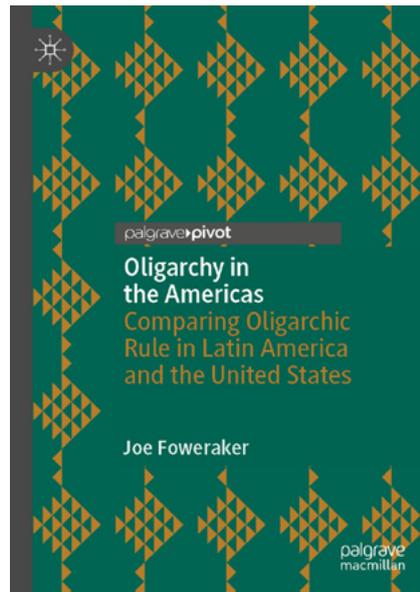
David J. Smith was a Fulbright US Scholar at the University of Tartu (Estonia). He is a career coach and the president of the Forage Center for Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Education. David teaches as adjunct faculty at the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University and the School of International Service at American University. He is the past president of the NCAC Chapter of the Fulbright Association, and lives in Rockville, Maryland, US. He can be reached at [davidjsmith@davidjsmithconsulting.com](mailto:davidjsmith@davidjsmithconsulting.com)

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# REVIEWS

# “GLOBAL, HEARTLESS AND WITHOUT NATIONAL IDENTITY”: OLIGARCHY IN TODAY’S WORLD

LOUIS E. ESPARZA



*Oligarchy in the Americas: Comparing Oligarchic Rule in Latin America and the United States* by Joe Foweraker, Visiting Fulbright Scholar in political science to the University of Colorado at Boulder, 1992-1993

Joe Foweraker’s *Oligarchy in the Americas* is a sobering and provocative comparison between oligarchic tendencies in the United States and South America. Foweraker, who was the first professor of Latin American Politics at Oxford and Director of the Latin American Center there, provides historical lessons from Argentina and the US. His final chapter synthesizes these into a comparative politics of the Americas.

Foweraker’s argument—that that best form of government is one that can mix democracy with oligarchy—may seem counter-intuitive, but he quotes Aristotle’s *The Politics* to back this up: “[Aristotle] advocated an admixture of oligarchic and democratic rule—a combination he called polity or politeia” (48). He also cites the twentieth century Austrian political economist Joseph Schumpeter who wrote, “[D]emocracy is ‘simply’ a method for constraining oligarchic ambition and caprice” (102). Yet, as we know from history, when a small group of people take charge, these individuals are usually uninterested in defending the common good.

However, democracy, in Foweraker's view, also has a tendency to fall into corrupt demagoguery. He notes that Aristotle "defended polity as the best hope of achieving good government in conditions of inequality, which is simply that form of government that can promote the good life" but also warned, "Democracy was potentially dangerous because of its tendency to descend into demagoguery, while oligarchic rule was corrupt in the same degree that it was exclusionary and therefore incapable of securing the good of the community overall by defending the *res publica* (111).

Foweraker uses the Jim Crow era of America's history as an example of some of the worst that democracy can produce. Alabamans elected and re-elected Governor George C. Wallace several times. Wallace launched Alabama's community college system and attracted jobs to the state, but Wallace was also a segregationist with ties to the Ku Klux Klan and a nostalgic admiration for the Confederacy. For Foweraker, Wallace is an example of democracy falling into corrupt demagoguery.

Turning to Argentina, Foweraker does not distinguish between populism and cults of personality of the kind seen there. Juan Perón and Evita were Argentina's iconic mid-century President and First Lady. Perón increased wages, granted women's suffrage, provided universal health care, and created social security. "Peronism" is a unique form of Argentine working-class nationalism and has become a regular feature of Argentine electoral politics. But Perón also censored political enemies, extolled Italian Fascism, and antagonized intellectuals. Foweraker calls this "corruption" and argues that it "leads to the balkanization of the state" (41). In Foweraker's reading, Perónists joined with social movements and mercantilists to oust the rural elite. Falling prey to inflation and debt, Perónists preferred corruption to associating with ranchers.

Foweraker then dispenses with both Jim Crow and Peronism in equal measure and examines today's oligarchs. He argues they are particularly sclerotic which makes them a greater threat to democracy than anything coming from social movements. He also notes that oligarchs are no longer rooted in community and republicanism, citing Christopher Lasch's posthumous *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* where he argues that oligarchy now is "global, heartless and without national identity. In [Lasch's] view, the phenomenon of the 'circulation of elites...strengthens the likelihood that elites will exercise power irresponsibly, precisely because they recognize so few obligations to the predecessors and the community.(114)'"

While Foweraker laments that elites have abandoned their morals, we should remember that nineteenth and twentieth century elites were not particularly moral either. William Henry Vanderbilt, Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and Henry Ford, with \$85 billion between them (in current

dollars), were as responsible for indigenous displacement and militia violence as they were for their philanthropy. Similarly, Argentine's ranchers helped expand state control into indigenous areas as much as they lifted the country's economy to parity with European countries.

Despite these important points, Foweraker's argument still stands. Compared to today's elites, Victorian elites may seem like champions of the public sphere. Consider that Elon Musk alone is worth \$219 billion and benefits from a now-robust national security state. Even Mexico's Carlos Slim is worth about as much today as Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Ford *combined* while donating a small fraction in comparison to them.

Considering how today's rising political and economic international tensions are focusing on important, foundational questions surrounding oligarchy, scholars should study the effects and responses to rootless oligarchs through a Fowerakerian lens. The countries of the Americas have important cultural, historical, colonial, and social differences, and we should not rely on the distribution of goods to explain all particular outcomes, but neither are all observed distinctions consequential to the analysis of political outcomes.

*Oligarchy in the Americas* provides some of the pieces necessary for making these distinctions and accomplishes this while also drawing enlightening conclusions with a unique comparison between Argentina and the US. Whether and how political exclusion works has been and will continue to be the source of great contention. Case studies like this make a good read and track the path dependent elements of the exclusions to come.

***Compared to today's elites, Victorian elites . . . seem like champions of the public sphere.***

Joe Foweraker, *Oligarchy in the Americas: Comparing Oligarchic Rule in Latin America and the United States*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. 139 pages. \$48.

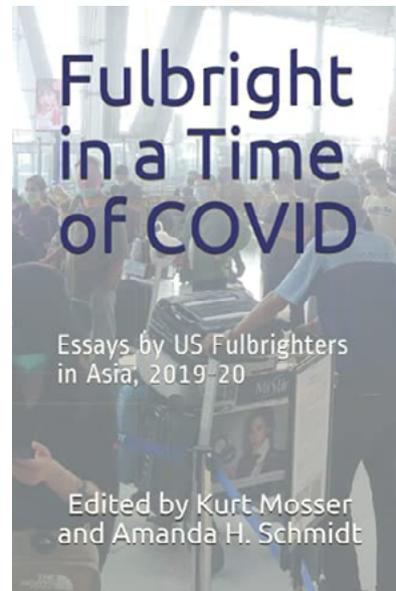
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Louis E. Esparza is Professor of Sociology at California State University-Los Angeles and Fulbright Distinguished Scholar at the University of Brasília (UnB). His research has appeared in *Global Labor Journal*, *Contemporary Justice Review*, *Society & Natural Resources*, *Contexts*, *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, and elsewhere. He is co-author of *Human Rights: A Primer* (Routledge 2016) and co-editor of *Human Rights Of, By, and For the People* (Routledge 2017). Along with his Sociology of Human Rights class at UnB, he is exploring political expression during the 2022 Brazilian Presidential election. His 2022 Fulbright project in Brazil is titled "Human Rights and Civil Society." His email is [louis.esparza@calstatela.edu](mailto:louis.esparza@calstatela.edu)



# HOPE IN THE TIME OF COVID

MARK SEIELSTAD



*Fulbright in a Time of COVID: Essays by U.S. Fulbrighters in Asia, 2019-20*, edited by Kurt Mosser, Fulbright Scholar at Soochow University in Suzhou from 2019-2020, and Amanda H. Schmidt, Fulbright Scholar at Sichuan University in China in 2019-2020

Three years after reports of an atypical pneumonia began emerging from Wuhan, China, the ramifications continue to impact us all. *Fulbright in a Time of COVID* dramatically brings us back to the bewildering early days in the form of a well-curated and carefully edited selection of 15 essays from US Fulbrighters in Asia whose awards were cut short by the pandemic. Written in the immediate aftermath of their truncated time abroad, many of the essays offer startlingly raw, honest, and affecting accounts of the joys, challenges, triumphs, and failures that we all recognize as the hallmarks of any Fulbright experience—with the surreal intensity of a gathering global pandemic as backdrop.

Each contribution within this small volume ultimately transcends the specific circumstances of this strange moment in time and offers compelling witness to the curiosity, spirit, and resilience of those who seek out such experiences in the name of cross-cultural relations. I found the collection profoundly inspirational and vivid proof of the value of the Fulbright program, and despite their hardships, the authors agree. The dedication reads, “to the Fulbright Program and all the people who make these programs possible.”

***Each contribution . . . offers compelling witness to the curiosity, spirit, and resilience of all of us who seek out such experiences in the name of improving cross-cultural understanding.***

The book's chapters include contributions from six students and six senior scholars researching in China (which includes the two editors), one student in Singapore, and two English Teaching Assistants in Malaysia. It begins in Wuhan itself, and the subsequent chapters are loosely ordered by social or physical geography from central China, providing an eerie perspective on the flow of rumor and news in the notoriously opaque Chinese system. By the middle of March (2020), most Fulbrighters had been hustled out of their host countries, in varying states of anguish and defiance. In some cases, the awardees had to abandon all their possessions and apartments; many were away from "home" for the Chinese New Year Holiday and never made it back to their host universities.

While Covid figures into each of the chapters, the contributions serve as meditations on the larger themes of bridging cultures and deepening our understanding of what it means to be an American in a more globalized but still fractious world. A few themes emerge.

First, the numerous disciplines supported by Fulbright are a continuing strength, and the program enables significant scholarly work. Especially at the senior level, it was often essential to finish specific projects for purposes of tenure or promotion, and the resulting hardships were palpable. For students, awards can provide vital support for overseas research, but their greater value seems to be the pretext they provide for a prolonged experience living abroad. Charlotte Hacker, a PhD ecology student, expressed the profound effect of her experience: "China will always be a place of refuge and solace," she wrote (136) and "Some days ache more than others and on those days I hold onto the veracity I now know myself to possess. I'll get back to China" (137).

The student accounts reminded me of my own student research Fulbright to Algeria in 1992. On the basis of only a reasonable facility in French, I boldly proposed a year researching the origins and diversity of Berber languages. While it's obvious to me in retrospect that this comically ambitious and naive proposal would not have advanced our understanding of Berber linguistics in the slightest, I salute Fulbright for their willingness to enable me to discover this on my own. However, a vicious civil war broke out, and my award was canceled before it began—so I sympathize viscerally with the anguish of many of this volume's authors.

The second theme that emerges is dismay at the state of American monolingualism. Admittedly, Chinese presents formidable linguistic challenges, but few countries require fluency like China. Thus, a couple of the chapters belong to the genre of "The Innocents Abroad and other bumbling tales"—valid Fulbright experiences, but maybe a bit tired in the telling. While few of the authors entered China with adequate fluency, almost all found creative and effective ways of interaction, testament to the indomitable human/Fulbright spirit.

Finally, the English Teaching Assistant (ETA) program is a strength of the Fulbright program. The two chapters written by ETAs posted to Malaysia, provide some of the most aching, yet joyous accounts of the entire book. Tianna Anderson wrote about the feeling of loss which “resurged” during a meditation: “I smell the detergent on my baju, knowing that by the end of the day it will smell of sweat instead. I taste the tea in my thermos, hot and bitter. I hear the honking of horns and sputtering of engines. It is perfect. I gasped and opened my eyes, breaking the spell” (45).

Upon finishing this book, I wished nothing more than to hear from all of these authors again—now—after additional time for reflection on their experience of this unsettling point in time. Their wisdom and insights left me comforted and optimistic about our common future.

Kurt Mosser and Amanda H. Schmidt, editors, *Fulbright in a Time of COVID: Essays by U.S. Fulbrighters in Asia, 2019-20*. (no publisher) 2021. 245 pages. \$6.14 pb or .99 Kindle.

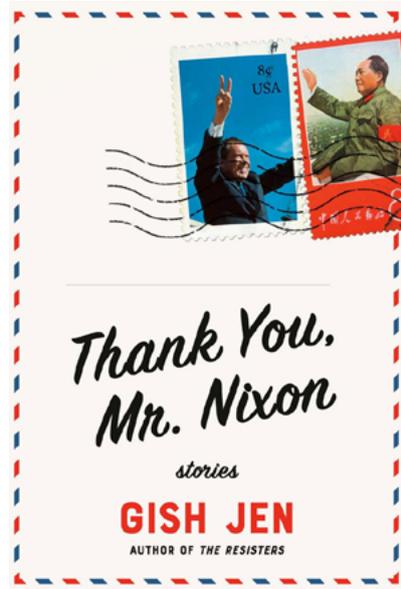
#### BIOGRAPHY

Mark Seielstad received his PhD in Biology from Harvard University in 1998, on the basis of fieldwork conducted in Mali, Ethiopia, Sudan, Thailand and Vietnam. From 2002-2010 he worked at the Genome Institute of Singapore before joining the University of California, San Francisco. He has served previously on the faculties of the National University of Singapore and the Harvard School of Public Health. In 2019-2020 he was a Fulbright Senior Scholar at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan, and was previously awarded a Fulbright student award to Algeria in 1993, before it was canceled abruptly by the outbreak of civil war in the host country. His email is mark.seielstad@ucsf.edu



# UNDERSTANDING CHINA FROM NIXON TO THE PANDEMIC

BARBARA BENNETT PETERSON



*Thank you, Mr. Nixon: Stories* by Gish Jen, Fulbrighter to the People's Republic of China in 2003.

Award-winning novelist and short story writer Gish Jen's latest book is *Thank You, Mr. Nixon*, a collection of linked short stories which begin with former President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and end with the Covid-19 worldwide pandemic. Jen is sensitive and insightful, moving with dexterity, for example, from complications of the Cultural Revolution to the simplicity of airing spring quilts; from the significance of dull Mao jackets in blue and grey to the complexities of a foreign expert's life in China teaching English at a coal-mining institute and falling in love. A Chinese-American herself, she speaks with a Chinese voice and a brilliant knowledge of China during the last momentous fifty years. With each story, the book becomes more penetrating and nuanced as the characters overlap and their life experiences interconnect.

The first short story "Thank You, Mr. Nixon" offers context: The narrator, a Little Red Guard in the time of Mao, meets the perceived "American imperialist" President Nixon. She's careful to

*With each story, the book becomes more penetrating and nuanced as the characters overlap and their life experiences interconnect.*

restrict her speech so as not to offend. The Little Red Guard admires Pat Nixon's red coat and says, "Thank You, Mr. Nixon" for introducing exchange opportunities with China, explaining: "We loved our country, but it was not red flags that we wanted. It was red coats" (6).

"It's the Great Wall" introduces China's major tourist attractions: the Great Wall, Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Ming Tombs, Chinese hotels, masses of bicycles, the Guangzhou train station, and the Beijing airport. But it goes beyond that, providing vivid description: "There were bicycles and carts everywhere as well as buses, trams, trucks and what appeared to be old Russian cars . . . On the smaller streets, people squatted outside their homes, chopping and smoking....pigeons were drying...laundry hung everywhere" (19-20).

In "A Tea Tale" a young Chinese-American couple attempts to open a tea shop in the US but must deal with their tea suppliers in Yunnan Province, China. When a dispute breaks out, they undergo conflict resolution. The narrator remarks, "Everyone wants a piece of China" (95).

The importance of achievement in Chinese culture is paramount in "Mr. Crime and Punishment and War and Peace," which first appeared in the *Yale Review*. There, a Chinese law student desires to become an immigration lawyer to aid her countrymen in obtaining either a green card or American citizenship (the title comes from the fact that the male student who helps her recommends Dostoyevsky). This is also a tale of Chinese loyalty, especially when abroad in American universities. Other traditional Chinese values are portrayed here as well: respect for one's elders, the value of hard work, the value of an education, the duty to honor one's parents and relatives, the acceptance of racial diversity, and the expectation to lead an "upright" life.

This last theme is also treated in "Rothko, Rothko," the tale of a young Chinese art forger who desires to sell her fake Rothko paintings for millions. In the end, she does the right thing and the deal falls through, but she and her cohorts console themselves knowing their parents would be proud.

Several stories, including the last one, "Detective Dog," which was originally published in *The New Yorker* and was included in the *Best American Short Stories of 2022*, focus on the differences between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland and the character of Bobby Koo. Bobby Koo, originally from Hong Kong, makes good money on Wall Street following her graduation from a prestigious American university, but she falls into a romance with a drummer, who leads her to become a dissident in Hong Kong, protesting the island's annexation by the Mainland. "Detective Dog" is a crescendo wherein all the stories come together. The author reveals that living in America is a blessing: It's a place of freedom and opportunity wherein one can teach Thoreau and even his ideas of Civil Disobedience.

Gish Jen is spot-on in her description of Chinese customs and viewpoints throughout this collection. She uses her stories to teach moral lessons, to engender an appreciation for things Chinese, and to offer historical perspective in contrast to the larger picture of Chinese-American interactions. She artfully weaves together the interactive histories of the last fifty years of China and America, suggesting what these superpowers have to offer one another—and reinforces Senator Fulbright's ideas of pursuing international understanding.

Gish Jen, *Thank you, Mr. Nixon*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022. 256 pages. \$28.00.

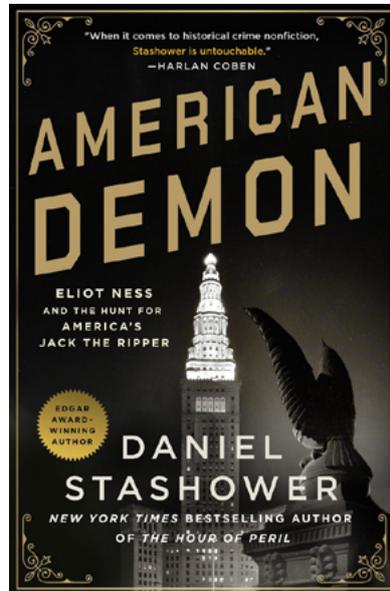
#### BIOGRAPHY

Barbara Bennett Peterson is an Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Hawaii and a former Fellow at the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii. She was also a Professor of History by Courtesy at Oregon State University and has taught for California State University San Bernardino, Palm Desert campus in retirement. She is married to Dr. Frank L. Peterson, Emeritus Professor of Geology, University of Hawaii. Barbara Peterson was the founding president of Hawaii's Fulbright Chapter. She has published 22 books and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize seven times. She is a Distinguished Alumni of the University of Hawaii. She was a Senior Fulbright Scholar to Japan (1967) and to China (PRC 1988-89). Her email address is [fandbpeterson@comcast.net](mailto:fandbpeterson@comcast.net)



# THE MAN THAT CLEVELAND KNEW

REMINGTON RUYLE



*American Demon: Eliot Ness and the Hunt for America's Jack the Ripper* by Daniel Stashower, winner of the Raymond Chandler Fulbright Fellowship in Detective and Crime Fiction Writing to the UK in 1992.

In 1934, a dark cloud began to form over the city of Cleveland as the body parts of a young woman were found floating along the shores of Lake Erie. At the same time, the lawman Eliot Ness was about to take the city's political scene by storm as the newly appointed Public Safety Director. In *American Demon: Eliot Ness and the Hunt for America's Jack the Ripper*, acclaimed biographer and historian Daniel Stashower explores the past of an icon of American justice and the investigation into a series of brutal murders that would haunt his career.

Stashower takes an honest look at the life of a man often shrouded in mysticism for his role as the leader of the “Untouchables,” a group of prohibition officers who orchestrated raids on the bootleg liquor empire of notorious gangster Al Capone. Son of Norwegian immigrants, Ness developed an interest in law enforcement through his brother-in-law, an investigator at the US Department of Justice who “saw a potential in Ness, teaching him in turn to use his fists, drive a car, and handle a gun” (23). Stashower remarks, “[T]he decision to follow in his brother-in-law’s footsteps would not have been an obvious one” (25) and that “Ness was notably vague” (26) about his

start in law enforcement. In his early years at the Prohibition Bureau, Ness struggled to make good impressions. Nevertheless, he set his sights high, proving that his lack of experience had no bearing on his commitment to the values that define the archetypal officer of the law.

As leader of the Capone Squad, Ness established himself as a lawman with upstanding ethics, a cop who could not be bought. But “Ness was really two men” as Oscar Farley, the co-author of the semi-autobiographical book *The Untouchables* points out (21). In his public position as Cleveland’s Public Safety Director, Ness spearheaded several anti-corruption campaigns, rooting out dirty cops and the criminal enterprises that thrived on backroom deals. In his personal life, Ness enjoyed drinking and women, often going straight from his office to Cleveland’s most elite nightclubs where he would stay all night before returning to work the next morning. On one occasion described by Stashower, Ness was involved in a car accident that quickly became a scandal after it was revealed that he had been drinking prior to entering his vehicle despite his many campaigns to punish citizens who drove while intoxicated.

As Public Safety Director, Ness went up against gangsters and special interests, never shying away from a powerful opponent, but a series of brutal murders proved that there just might be a crime that Ness could not solve. Beginning with the parts of the young woman that washed ashore in 1934, 12 other dismembered bodies would be found in Cleveland over the next half decade. These killings were attributed to the Mad Butcher of Kingsbury Run, also known as the Cleveland Torso Killer. The gruesome nature of the crimes and identities of the victims—many of whom were homeless, sex workers, or transients—leads Stashower to brand the Mad Butcher as America’s Jack the Ripper. As Stashower relates the investigation into the Mad Butcher, he delicately overlays Ness’s tenure as Public Safety Director, the facts of the case, and the crimes of the Mad Butcher, connecting them to a vast web of individuals—including the Butcher’s victims, the coroner, the case detectives, the Cuyahoga County sheriff, the press, the mayor, and other prominent political figures.

*A series of brutal murders proved that there just might be a crime that Elliot Ness could not solve.*

The Butcher proved to be vastly different from the gangsters and crooked cops Ness had previously thwarted. Forensic science was still in its infancy, and police relied heavily on eyewitness testimony and other circumstantial evidence. Much like Jack the Ripper, the identity of the Cleveland torso killer has never been confirmed, and the murders remain unsolved. Stashower contends, however, that the crimes were indeed solved by Ness. Ness suspected Francis E. Sweeney, a disgraced surgeon with a history of alcohol and drug abuse, of committing the series of heinous acts. Ness’s pursuit of Sweeney is equal parts thriller and exposé of the inner-workings of the Cleveland justice system. As Ness becomes further convinced of Sweeney’s guilt, he compromises his hard-fought morals, at one point keeping Sweeney

sequestered in a hotel for days of interrogation and dirty tricks practiced by the same corrupt cops Ness had built his career arresting. Stashower comments, “Ness set his principles aside in this case, turning his back on due process. The investigation had brought him low” (219).

Despite evidence indicating Sweeney’s involvement, he was never publicly named as a suspect or charged with any crimes, due, in large part, to the fact that he was the cousin of an Ohio Congressman and an outspoken critic of Ness.

Despite his failures in the Mad Butcher case, time has enshrined Eliot Ness as an example par excellence of ethical character. In 1961, reporter Bud Silverman noted that before the myth of Ness grows in grandeur, someone “ought to . . . describe the man as Cleveland knew him” (9). *American Demon*, beyond its contributions to the genre of American crime non-fiction, humanizes Ness and provides an honest portrayal of a complex man and the true stories that have cemented his place in history.

Daniel Stashower, *American Demon: Eliot Ness and the Hunt for America’s Jack the Ripper*. New York: Minotaur Books, 2022. 342 pages. \$29.99 hc.

#### BIOGRAPHY

Remington Ruyle was awarded a Fulbright-García Robles Graduate Degree Program Grant in 2020 to pursue her Master’s in Sustainability Science at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. While Ruyle currently works in the field of climate change policy, she has interests in a wide variety of areas, including true crime.



# FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES: ASSOCIATE EDITORS WANTED

## EDITORS

As the *Fulbright Chronicles* completes its fourth issue during our first year, we are looking to expand our editorial team to reflect the global nature and breadth of the Fulbright Program.

We are especially interested in receiving expressions of interest from Fulbrighters with editing experience from Southern Africa, East Asia, Northern Europe and Central America.

Associate Editors are part of a global team that oversees the publication of an independent, volunteer-led, peer-reviewed quarterly journal by and for Fulbrighters. Responsibilities including assisting with:

- Setting editorial policy and direction
- Soliciting articles
- Conducting the peer review process
- Copy-editing articles before publication
- Identifying topics for special issues
- Participating in monthly editorial meetings
- Networking with the National Commissions and Fulbright Associations

If you are interested, please send a short letter of interest describing what you would bring to the editorial team and why you are interested to: [bsvare@albany.edu](mailto:bsvare@albany.edu).

# FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES SEEKS BOOK REVIEWERS

## BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR

If you're interested in reviewing books for *Fulbright Chronicles* and have experience reviewing non-academic, general interest books, please send your contact information, details about your Fulbright award(s), academic discipline, previous publications, as well as any particular interests that will help match you with the right book to Erika J. Waters at [books@fulbright-chronicles.com](mailto:books@fulbright-chronicles.com)

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## EDITORS

As the journal by and for Fulbrighters, we rely on community members to help produce the *Fulbright Chronicles*. One of the most important ways is for the peer-review process. Each article is reviewed by two individuals, these may be members of the editorial team as well as individuals outside the editorial team. Here, we want to express our gratitude to the individuals who helped with this vital activity:

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