

FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES

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SCHOLAR • FULBRIGHT DOCTORAL DISSERTATION RESEARCH ABROAD

Fulbright Chronicles is an 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. Author Guidelines are available on our website (www.fulbright-chronicles.com).

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

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FULBRIGHT IS ALL ABOUT EDUCATION

KEVIN F. F. QUIGLEY AND BRUCE B. SVARE

Since its inception nearly 80 years ago, the purpose of the Fulbright Program has centered on education and its lasting impact on peace and prosperity. This focus has not changed in spite of challenges of access, affordability, controversies over curricula, intensifying competition from new modes of education and mounting skepticism about the value of education.

In this first issue of our second year, our contributors are all educators. They have a variety of stories to tell that align with the enduring purpose and focus of the Fulbright Program. By coincidence, two of our contributors (Karen Barton and Mark Frank) used the same evocative quote from Senator Fulbright to anchor their articles: “We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy, and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education.” Based on his life experiences, especially as a Rhodes Scholar, Senator Fulbright keenly understood that expanding the boundaries of wisdom, empathy, and perception is essential to develop the preconditions for a better world.

In this first issue of our second year, our contributors are all educators. They have a variety of stories to tell that align with the enduring purpose and focus of the Fulbright Program.

Reading the articles in this issue, you will sense that our contributors have internalized this vital message. These contributors include commentaries by Gokham Hacisalihoghu on how global exchange programs can advance plant food security and Ragupathy Kannan on how the Fulbright Program can be used to recruit foreign scholars.

In our articles, Sally Shelton-Colby discusses a remarkable diplomatic career working to make foes into friends; Karen Barton discusses how her Fulbright in Nepal following the Gorkha Earthquake has led to ongoing relationships connecting faculty, students and institutions. Molly Hamm-Rodriguez and Megan Jeanette Myers discuss the importance of community-based research based on their experiences in the Dominican Republic. Like Barton, Hamm-Rodriguez and Myers highlight the essential roles of their students in the effectiveness of the Fulbright experience.

Often the power of the Fulbright experience is enhanced by the individual’s own experience. Ito Outini, a human rights and a disabilities activist, has helped showcase the diverse programs that the Fulbright Programs offer, creating opportunities for others. Mark Frank draws on his own experience to

discuss the Fulbright University, a remarkable higher education institution in Vietnam dedicated to the purpose of the Fulbright Program. Rosina Krecek discusses the poignant irony of presenting a keynote on global public health just as WHO is pronouncing the global pandemic.

In addition to these articles, we have another set of reviews of books written by Fulbrighters reviewed by Fulbrighters. They cast a luminous light on the extraordinary range of talents and interests of our global community.

In our last issue, we wrote that a key objective for the *Fulbright Chronicles* this year was to expand the contributions from non-American Fulbrighters. We mentioned that we would be expanding our editorial team to help achieve this. We are very pleased that we have included a number of new associate editors. They include Habiba I. Atta (Nigeria), Jose Caetano (Portugal), Steven Darian (US), Fidel de la Cruz (Mexico), Aicha Lakhssass (Morocco), Maria Lopez de Bayas Alcantara (Spain), Narun Pat (New Zealand), and Aurelian Muntean (Romania). You can read more about them and their Fulbright experiences at www.fulbright-chronicles.com.

COMMENTARIES

MY FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST AWARD IN JAPAN: GLOBAL EXCHANGES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PLANT BIOLOGY AND FOOD SECURITY

GOKHAN HACISALIHOGU

ABSTRACT

This commentary provides an overview of my Fulbright experience in Japan, and how it changed my world view and advanced my career trajectory. The lectures were well-received, offering a good balance of STEM and STEM-learning topics. Fulbright opened new avenues for me to contribute to knowledge and changes. In our rapidly evolving world, broadening international connections and new cultural immersion in Japan were invaluable experiences.

Keywords: Japan • STEM • Covid-19 • learning • exchange our world



GLOBAL EXCHANGES BACKGROUND

The Covid-19 pandemic affected everyone and everything, including higher education. After two years of nearly worldwide closures, 2022 offered an exciting opportunity to resume international travel and global exchanges. I was awarded a Fulbright Specialist (FS) grant in Japan, working in the area of plant sciences. My assignment was to deliver a series of lectures at the University of Tokyo (U-Tokyo), through which I would share my knowledge, strengthen the link between my home university, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU), and U-Tokyo, and gain international experience.

When I traveled to Japan on May 2022, I joined the ranks of some 400 United States scholars who have shared their expertise with host institutions abroad each year through the Fulbright Specialist Program (FSP). My project focused on three main goals: to provide students with a firm grounding in plant nutrition and seed phenomics; to acquaint faculty and students with recent developments in successful undergraduate student research in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields; and to jointly seek out future collaboration opportunities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTCOMES

My host university, U-Tokyo, is considered the top university in Japan. Fulbright lecture participants came to learn about modern plant biology and STEM education. After discussing the details with the host, we decided to offer three lectures via in-person and online formats.

The first lecture summarized developments in the field of plant nutrition during the 21st century. The lecture built on these developments to offer context on present-day research, and then drilled down to the specific topic of gene-mapping from soybean plants for phosphorus deficiency conditions.

The theme of the second lecture was seed phenotyping and the natural variation of traits such as protein, oil, and weight among various food crops, including peas, beans, and flaxseed. The lecture concluded that diverse, high-value varieties of these crops could be used to improve global food security and nutrition, while also adapting to increasing climate stress. Given its link to health and economic well-being, the need to address food security and factors that critically impact it—such as soil, water, plant growth, and crop production—is of great concern worldwide. This is especially true given that climate change due to rising CO₂ levels will accelerate the decline of plant yield, loss of biodiversity, and reduction in nutrient content, threatening food systems globally.

The third lecture shared a sneak peek into open education resources and new teaching strategies in STEM education. The lecture covered how interventions in grit, mindset, and self-efficacy can help college students achieve more in STEM areas of study. The lecture went on to describe data showing the relationship between improved mindset traits and increased undergraduate student success in STEM fields.

All three lectures were well attended and received. Overall, it was a rewarding experience and a unique opportunity for the FSP scholars and lecture participants to exchange ideas. Those in attendance included the U-Tokyo Vice Dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences, faculty members, as well as U-Tokyo graduate and undergraduate students. The attendees agreed that the lecture series' objectives were met, and that the lectures were well-delivered and well-organized. They rated my ability to gain and keep their attention as high, and felt that the lectures were engaging and created interest around a critically important topic.

THIS ONE TIME IN JAPAN: PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS

Participation in this FSP required not only scientific involvement, but also cultural and linguistic immersion in a new country. I went to Japan during a time of global transition: after two years of border closures, Japan had only partially re-opened to travelers. Being a Fulbright Scholar in Japan post-pandemic made me fully appreciate the experience; I was very aware of what I had been missing while the borders were closed, and of the value-add that exchanges like this can bring, at both the personal and global levels.

The exchange fostered several ideas for potential ongoing projects. One that really excites me concerns rice nutritional biodiversity. The project explores important physical parameters of grain quality, including nutrition, color, density, volume, and the interactions of all of these. Since rice is a staple food crop for over half of the world population, this project portends new ways to think about health, lipids, and proteins, and their genetic variations.

My FSP experience in Japan exemplifies the importance of being open to learning from and understanding the perspectives of scholars and students in other countries. Undoubtedly, the Fulbright experience helps form worldwide relationships that allow for the cross-pollination of ideas and knowledge. In Tokyo, our cultural differences were not an obstacle; instead, they were the source of many learning opportunities. In addition to conducting the lecture series, I was able to meet with local volunteers with whom I learned about basic Japanese language, culture, and perspectives. I was also able to share my own perspective on academic life in the United States.

For me, the Fulbright experience was a stepping stone toward a more expanded world view and greater personal and professional adaptability. The experience also heightened the likelihood that I can achieve a lasting impact on food security, a challenge of global import. As a result of this experience, I am also interested in setting aside the time to learn and study the Japanese language. In short, it is hard to overstate the positive effect that this experience has had on my life. Fulbright made all this happen.

The Fulbright experience was a stepping stone toward a more expanded world view and greater personal and professional adaptability

In terms of career trajectory, my experience as a Fulbright Scholar shaped and developed my mindset not only as a scientist, but also a policy designer. The Fulbright experience allowed me to pursue a fellowship in Washington, DC to learn about US foreign policy and international development programs. This has the potential to greatly impact the trajectory of my future career.

While the FSP experience is very rewarding, it can also be stressful at times. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions in Japan made this even more true. Some of the things I did to help manage my visit during pandemic were to get fully vaccinated, wear a face mask everywhere, and use hand sanitizers continuously throughout the day.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Lastly, Fulbright is life-changing and more than worth the time and energy it requires. For me, the experience provided an opportunity for cultural immersion, while also helping me gain new skills. Japan is a wonderful place, with many surprises in every city. The specific FS project in which I was involved provided an excellent springboard for advancing plant biology, as well as for strengthening inter-institutional linkages with the host (U-Tokyo, Japan) and Florida A&M University, US. Overall, it was an exceptional experience for everyone involved, resulting in the exchange of many scholarly ideas and increased mutual understanding between the US and Japan. The Fulbright experience allowed me to encourage students in Japan to explore plant biological sciences. No matter one's discipline, there is a Fulbright program that fits and will no doubt be just as rewarding.

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Fulbright Specialist Gokhan Hacisalihoglu delivering lectures at the University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Gokhan Hacisalihoglu (PhD, Cornell) is a Professor of Biology at Florida A&M University, US. He is an often-published author and maintains active research on food crop improvement and dietary nutrients. In May 2022, he was Fulbright Specialist at University of Tokyo. He gratefully acknowledges Prof. T. Fujiwara (U-Tokyo) as an important part of this project and host. This study was supported by FB-US State Department. World Learning, Fulbright Japan, and S. Yamashita are sincerely thanked. Learn more at <https://twitter.com/GHagrifoodbio>. He can be reached at gokhan.h@famuedu

RECRUITING FOREIGN SCHOLARS VIA THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

RAGUPATHY KANNAN

ABSTRACT

As a three-time Fulbrighter, I narrate my experiences of bringing students from my overseas host institutions to my home state of Arkansas, and how this has built lasting international collaborations in keeping with the Arkansas senator's vision.

Keywords: Recruiting • outreach • graduate programs • international collaborations



UNLIKELY BEGINNINGS

I met him in a café in a bustling railway station in India. Over samosas and sweet milky tea, he said he was finishing his master's degree. "My passion is to go to America for biotechnology and become a scientist", he said in a hesitant mixture of Tamil and English. "But I have no money and I need guidance". "I'd be happy to help you", I said. "Just work with me step by step, and I will help you find a biomedical lab with full financial support in my state of Arkansas".

It was the year 2007. I was a US Fulbright Scholar in India, experiencing the rewards of the first of three Fulbright awards to various countries. Senator J. William Fulbright, a United States Senator from Arkansas, is a household name in Arkansas academic circles. I graduated from the college named after him in my alma mater, the University of Arkansas. I was inspired to apply for the Fulbright program by my professor, a veteran of three awards himself.

My host institution, G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology was nestled in the foot of the Himalayas. The university focused on agriculture education. There was little awareness of biodiversity, conservation, and sustainable farming, in this rural area. The field was therefore ripe for me to promote awareness. I taught wildlife and climate-oriented classes. For students who wanted a "lighter fare", I even led a birdwatching class under the auspices of their continuing education program. That class mushroomed into a nature club. Over a decade later, via multiple return visits and donations of binoculars and field notebooks, I help keep that club alive.

ONE-ON-ONE MENTORING

In keeping with the Fulbright spirit of promoting international understanding, I went beyond my required teaching assignments and worked one-on-one with five students I “hand-picked” in my host institution, based on their track record, motivation to excel, and basic English skills. I helped them draft inquiry letters to American faculty; prepare for the GRE and TOEFL exams; navigate through the tortuous application process; and even prepare for their dreaded visa interviews. Decades ago, I was in their stage, yearning to cross the seas for my higher education, but like a rudderless ship without help. I rendered the assistance that I craved for and missed.

Back in Arkansas, I spoke to faculty colleagues about each of the students’ strengths and weaknesses and their interests. I lubricated the application process by matching the applicants with their mentors. For the professors, the fact that a colleague has already vetted the students was a reassurance that they were not committing to an unknown student on the other side of the world. The biology graduate program in Arkansas strives to maintain a high degree of diversity by attracting applicants from all over the world. All foreign students are supported by a generous package of assistantships or fellowships, with a full tuition waiver.

The five students I mentored in my Indian host institution came to the University of Arkansas with full financial support. All have finished their doctoral degrees and have successfully established careers in Canada and the United States. Two have junior teaching positions in colleges and the others are employed by biotechnology firms working on cutting-edge areas of biomedical research, from gene editing to vaccine development.

PANDEMIC OPENS UP OPPORTUNITIES

The Covid-19 pandemic helped me intensify my recruitment of foreign students to Arkansas. Lockdowns and travel disruptions left me stranded for 13 months in Sri Lanka, where I had gone for my third Fulbright award. For the first time in its storied history, Fulbright programs were suspended worldwide. I spent much of that time reaching out to and assisting local students from the University of Ruhuna and elsewhere. All six students have secured fully funded PhD programs in Arkansas. A few more are in the pipeline. Students from outside my host institution also contacted me for assistance. The pandemic forced many US institutions to drop the GRE requirement, an impediment for many foreign students whose native language is not English. Some of my Sri Lankan recruits are here because of that waiver.

With a massive debt crisis spawned in part by the pandemic, some Sri Lankan students could not pay their application fee because of tightened currency controls. I had to find creative ways around this, to have their applications accepted. For example, I had them send local currency to causes I support in Sri Lanka and then paid their fees in US dollars here.

A STATUE THAT STANDS TALL

Last year was the 75th anniversary of the Fulbright Program. The venerable senator's statue on the University of Arkansas campus is now mired in controversy in the wake of George Floyd's death. Some say it must be removed because the senator voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1963. I tell them that it's best to view the senator from the totality of his life's accomplishments, rather than one single act, so to speak. I point out the dozen foreign students I helped bring to America, whose lives were changed drastically for the better, and who in turn have academically and culturally enriched our small rural state. Most of them were women who may not have advanced in the STEM fields if the Fulbright program hadn't sent me to their campuses. In fact, one of the first acts a female Sri Lankan student did upon arrival on campus was to visit the statue and mutter a word of thanks to the senator.

Fast forward 15 years. That shy and soft-spoken lad I met over tea in the noisy railway station is now a scientist in Washington D.C. With pride, I track his progression as a scientist. He is a prolific writer with an impressive scientific publication record. In affiliation with US military scientists, he recently wrote on the effect of tourniquets on mitochondrial function of lower limb tissues. His other works span the gamut from renal failure in mouse models to femoral head necrosis in broiler chickens. Not bad for a young man from rural and humble beginnings. He gratefully acknowledges my role in his life and has been in touch. He married and brought his wife to America and helped her pursue her own dream of getting a graduate degree here.

Over the years, I have worked with other institutions in the Indian subcontinent. I have assisted more students to achieve their dreams of coming to Arkansas and other states for graduate study. I even brought a junior faculty member and her family for a semester from Pant University to my institution under the Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence program (2009).

FUTURE OUTLOOK

With the declining enrollment of American graduate students, US graduate programs are increasingly reliant on foreign students to maintain their competitive edge, especially in the STEM fields. I encourage other Fulbrighters to do similar recruitment activities. Reaching out to remote corners of the globe and changing lives and careers for the better is deeply fulfilling. I intend to continue recruiting abroad virtually and in person whenever possible. I have shifted focus in recent years to South America. Unfortunately, I have been rejected two years in a row for a Fulbright award to Ecuador, after clearing the peer-review stage both years.

Hopefully, I will have the honor of shaping more young scientists' trajectories via the Fulbright program. Bringing these young scholars from abroad has been beyond just a service to science, my alma mater, state, and country.

When Covid-19 canceled the 2020 cycle, I and a few others affected appealed to the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FFSB) to consider easing the competitive reapplication process for that year's program participants. Other federal programs (like NOAA's Teacher-at-Sea) deferred awards or made similar accommodations to affected awardees to enable them to finish their interrupted or canceled programs, but not the Fulbright (which gave us "reapplication privileges"). I humbly urge the FFSB to revisit its COVID-year grantees policy so that we can finish what we started or missed. Hopefully, I will have the honor of shaping more young scientists' trajectories via the Fulbright program. Bringing these young scholars from abroad has been beyond just a service to science, my alma mater, state, and country. I consider it a legacy of, and a fitting tribute to, that visionary senator from Arkansas.

BIOGRAPHY

Ragupathy Kannan is a professor of biology at the University of Arkansas in Fort Smith. He holds a PhD from the University of Arkansas. He has had three Fulbright awards; two to India (2007) and Sri Lanka (2020), and a Fulbright Specialist award to India (2019). He travels and lectures widely on climate change. His writings have appeared in prestigious journals like *Science* and *National Geographic*. For more on his recruitment efforts, see *Alumnus Kannan Sells Students from India and Sri Lanka on U of A* published in *Arkansas*, the magazine of the Arkansas Alumni Association, Spring 2022, page 20. E-mail: ragupathy.kannan@uafs.edu

ARTICLES

THE ART OF DIPLOMACY: MAKING FOES INTO FRIENDS

SALLY SHELTON-COLBY

ABSTRACT

My Fulbright at Sciences Po in Paris enabled me to research how France and North Vietnam, which had been at war for years until France was defeated, were able to rebuild their relationship into the strategic and economic partnership it is today. The principal conclusion I drew was that negotiation between belligerents can produce surprising results if both sides are willing to understand the other's perspective and compromise even if it hurts. This is a lesson which has guided my professional career as a US Government official and an academic, as well as in my personal life.

Keywords: diplomacy • compromise • Vietnam • France • Fulbright



MY FULBRIGHT SHAPED MY LIFE

My Fulbright at the Paris Institute of Political Studies, better known as Sciences Po, has shaped my life both professionally and personally. My research there grounded my emerging conviction that diplomacy could solve just about any problem, whether transnational or personal. What was required were foresight, patience, understanding of “the other’s” perspective and compromise. These qualities are at the core of the Fulbright experience.

During my Fulbright, I came to realize that diplomacy was the career embedded in my DNA. I have long been fascinated by languages and other cultures. As a child, I listened to my grandmother’s broken English, not understanding why she didn’t speak it perfectly. And I remember her speaking Czech to my mother, the first language for both of them. Of course, I knew they were talking about me, so I mastered a few words but felt inadequate when I couldn’t communicate with my great-grandmother who spoke only Czech. Was this where my love of the world that I did not know was born?

Then came Latin at parochial school, soon to be followed by French, which became, in my still small world, the quintessence of sophistication and civilization. Off to university and Italian came into my life, now dominated almost entirely by studying the literature written in these languages. I did the honors program in French....a year early....and the honors program in Italian, also a year early.

EDUCATION AND FULBRIGHT

But close to finishing my undergraduate work, I experienced an intellectual crisis. As important as languages are, one has to have something useful, and hopefully important, to say. So I began to think beyond the acquisition of languages to the broader world out there. By now it was the late 1960s and the world was consumed with the Cold War and the war in Vietnam. The latter led to my growing fascination with what was then called Indochina ; that is, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (the US military was in all three countries, not just Vietnam). Anti-war and pro-war advocates swirled around me as did conscientious objectors who often fled to Canada to escape the draft. I was trained to think of the USSR as the principal threat to US. security so why were we in Vietnam, a country struggling to extricate itself from centuries of colonization and come into its own?

I spent the first year of graduate school at The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Bologna, Italy center where I was studying US-European relations and Europe's strongly-voiced opinions about the US war in Vietnam. So it was perhaps inevitable that I would decide to do my degree with a focus on Southeast Asia and a particular emphasis on Indochina.

As the war dragged on and the government of my beloved France became increasingly critical of US policy towards Vietnam (with the French president calling for the US to end the war and withdraw), I began to wonder what was shaping the French government's views. After all, France was a staunch NATO ally and itself had been badly defeated by a communist insurgency in North Vietnam. It appeared that France was trying to re-build its relations with North Vietnam, in spite of the bloodshed and the brutal defeat it had endured. I realized there were some lessons to be learned. That is, would it be possible for the US to some day, somehow re-build its relations with Vietnam as the French appeared to be doing?

The most efficient way of proceeding was to research, research, research. I applied for a Fulbright to study at Sciences Po in Paris and it shaped my professional future. Unfortunately, many of the documents I had hoped to study had not yet been declassified but I managed to gain access to some of the French government officials shaping that country's policy towards Vietnam. My conclusion was that even the most complex problems can be solved via negotiation. The Fulbright changed my way of thinking about seemingly impossible-to-fix challenges facing the US Government. And it gave me hope, if not certainty, that I could make a difference if I persevered, no matter how awful the odds, and effectively argued my point-of-view. That perspective, based on my research, was and is today, that the US must make every effort to achieve and maintain peace, no matter how distant that goal might be and how many compromises must be made. If the French could do it with North Vietnam, why could the US not do it with the USSR, the People's Republic of China, Cuba and later Venezuela, Iran, North Korea,

Sudan, Libya, and Mexico and Central America? I know ... this is a strange grouping of countries but they have much in common: anger at the US on the one hand and, on the other, miserable governance with political and economic models that deliver for the elite but not for the populace.

DIPLOMACY IN A TIME OF TURMOIL

In practice, that is to say in terms of policy, the US must make concessions with governments it dislikes or even disdains if it wants those governments to make changes in their policies. This is, in essence, the art of negotiating. I had ample experience doing this in my first job in the US Department of State when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs (now Western Hemisphere Affairs). This was during the administration of President Jimmy Carter who was the first president to put a priority on human rights. There was considerable push-back from career Foreign Service Officers who argued that the US Government had to work with the government in power and not the government the US wished were in power. There was massive negotiating with my own colleagues at State as to what specific steps the US Government should or should not take in the quest to promote human rights. I often felt that I spent more time negotiating with my own Department of State colleagues than I did with foreign government officials! But it was my job to press for acceptance of the president's views and press I did.

As the US ambassador to Barbados, Grenada and other countries in the Eastern Caribbean, I early on encountered another professional challenge. The first coup d'état in the history of the English-speaking Caribbean had taken place in Grenada a few weeks before I arrived and US-Grenada relations had begun to deteriorate sharply. The dilemma I faced was what should US policy be towards the new far-left government in Grenada and the growing Cuban and Soviet influence in that country? Drawing on my instincts to negotiate, as shaped by my Fulbright, I made major efforts to work with the new Grenadian government, as difficult as that was. However, Washington overruled me and, in essence, told me to cut off contact with the Grenada government. I was convinced the US Government was wrong to prohibit me from exploring how to improve the US-Grenada relationship. I still regret losing that policy battle. Washington later invaded Grenada and the government is now democratic; but did it require an invasion to accomplish that?

I then went as a Fellow to Harvard University's Center for International Affairs where I continued the research I had begun on my Fulbright. By then, France and North Vietnam had established diplomatic relations and I longed to be able to get into the weeds...that is, the details...of how they did it...but Paris was far away...

PUBLIC SERVICE A SECOND TIME

On my return to public service in the Clinton administration, I constantly drew on the lessons I had learned studying the French-North Vietnamese rapprochement: negotiate, negotiate, negotiate and do not despair if at first you do not succeed. In this case, I was head of the bureau of global programs at the US Agency for International Development where I had a staff of 500-550 Foreign Service and Civil Service Officers and an annual budget of roughly one billion US dollars.

The days were filled with constant challenges, primarily of a development nature. We wrestled with myriad complex and perhaps unanswerable questions: should the poorest countries be the priority for US foreign aid or the more advanced developing countries on the verge take-off, which would soon no longer need assistance? Should the priority be countries of strategic importance to the US? Should the focus be health or education? Or food security or economic reform? Democracy strengthening or a clean-up of the environment? Etc... As rebuilding broken diplomatic relations requires patience and compromise, so does development. In grappling with these questions, the lessons learned as a Fulbrighter were always on my mind.

I might add that I married William Colby, former Director of Central Intelligence, who had been the CIA's station chief in Saigon and in a second tour ran the CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support) program in South Vietnam. He was entranced by the country and its culture so I was proud of my ability, thanks to my Fulbright, to season our many conversations about Vietnam with my own perspectives.

After his death, I went back to Paris as Deputy Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). With 30 member countries ranging from Germany to Japan and from Mexico to Australia, the name of the game was compromise with the OECD's leadership. It was a never-ending search to find agreement among the representatives of the wide range of political cultures represented there. I never stopped thinking about a victorious North Vietnam and a defeated France trying to find common ground. As I said earlier, I would constantly remind myself that, if they could do it, we could get the Turks and the Greeks, the Germans and the Poles, the Japanese and the South Koreans, inter alia, to come to an agreement, imperfect though each might consider it.

Following my posting at the OECD, I moved to Mexico City to head an anti-corruption project for the Government of Mexico that was financed by the US Department of State. Given the long history of animosity between the two countries and the pervasive corruption in Mexico, I knew I had to proceed with extreme caution. I surmised that the French felt this as they began to reconnect with North Vietnam, which had been occupied by France for almost a century. And certainly the North Vietnamese would be uncertain about the reaction of the government they had defeated so badly at Dien

Bien Phu in 1954. But these two erstwhile foes worked slowly and carefully as did I when I recommended some fundamental and possibly unacceptable changes to Mexico's governmental institutions. One has to keep the end goal in mind and always be willing to compromise, if necessary.

FRUITS OF EDUCATION: MY FULBRIGHT

Returning to the US after my assignment in Mexico, I began to teach at American University's School of International Service. All of my courses focus on US foreign policy. I delight to point out, as does the wonderful book on the subject titled "How Enemies Become Friends" by Charles Kupchan, if a government wishes to, it can make friends with the most unlikely former enemies. The US, which fought a long and nasty war with North Vietnam, now has excellent diplomatic relations with that country and even an increasingly close security arrangement. The long fraught US-Mexico relations have morphed into an ever closer partnership thanks in large part to the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a free trade pact among the three countries. Let us not forget that in World War II the US fought Japan, Germany, and Italy, who are now among our staunchest allies. So enemies can become friends, if there is the will.

CONCLUSION

The world tends to focus on the problems it faces but so many problems have been solved or on the way to being solved. My Fulbright helped me understand the importance of looking at countries' accomplishments and not their mistakes. France and Vietnam, once bitter enemies, will this year (2023) celebrate a half century of normal diplomatic relations with an important strategic partnership strengthening the bonds between the two countries. It is a bit difficult for me now to wrap my head around the long journey these countries undertook since my Fulbright research was focused on the negatives; that is, the stratospherically high level of grievance, the lack of trust and the myriad doubts that anything positive could come from negotiating. But diplomacy worked and this taught me a vital life lesson. Never lose hope when one faces a seemingly unsolvable problem. Go for it. Talk with the other side, then talk some more and then talk again. Surprising changes occur as "the other" begins to understand your point of view and you theirs. The result may not be 100 percent satisfactory but it is inevitably better than no result at all!

My Fulbright helped me understand the importance of looking at countries' accomplishments and not their mistakes.

NOTES

1. There is a rich, fascinating literature on this topic of making foes into friends. This includes Charles Kupchan's *How Enemies Become Friends, the Source of Stable Peace*, Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth's *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*, and Adam Kahane's *Collaborating with the Enemy: How to Work with People You Don't Agree with or Like or Trust*.

BIOGRAPHY

Ambassador Sally Shelton-Colby, currently a professor at American University's School of International Service, has held a number of senior positions in the US Government, international organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. She was Deputy Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, France. Prior to that, she was Assistant Administrator for Global Programs at the US Agency for International Development, US Ambassador to several countries in the Eastern Caribbean, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Vice President of Bankers Trust Co. and Legislative Assistant to Senator Lloyd Bentsen (later Secretary of Treasury). She has served on the boards of directors of numerous non-profit organizations and multinational corporations, and has taught US foreign policy at Georgetown University, Harvard and universities in France, Mexico, South Korea and Chile. She earned her MA at The Johns Hopkins Nitze School of Advanced International Studies and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to the Institut des Sciences Politiques in Paris, France, 1968-1969. She can be reached at sshelton-colby@gmail.com

MAPPING SOCIAL VULNERABILITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GORKHA EARTHQUAKE: A FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST JOURNEY IN NEPAL

KAREN S. BARTON

ABSTRACT

As a Fulbright Specialist to Nepal, my goal was to help the Institute for Crisis Management Studies in Kathmandu survey and map communities affected by the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, the largest natural disaster to impact the nation in recorded history. This paper shows how one fellowship expanded its scope to include a team of first-generation college students from Colorado, providing student participants with opportunities to increase field skills and network with overseas partners.

Keywords: Nepal • natural disaster • community resilience • GIS • experiential learning



INTRODUCTION

In 2018, I had the privilege of receiving a Nepal Fulbright Specialist award to work with the Institute for Crisis Management Studies (ICMS) in Kathmandu. In collaboration with Dr. Ram Thapaliya at ICMS, our field plan was to research and map the Kavre-Palanchok region of the Kathmandu Valley in the wake of the Gorkha earthquake, one of the largest natural disasters in Nepal's recorded history. The April 2015 quake, with a magnitude of 7.8, killed 8,964 people and injured 21,952 more, toppling multi-story buildings in the capital, the countryside, and creating massive landslides throughout the celebrated Himalaya Mountains. Our Fulbright Comprehensive Municipalities Mapping project, with support from Nepal's Central Government and the Swiss Red Cross, would give us forty days to conduct mountain fieldwork, map the affected valley, and submit an external funding proposal to help vulnerable communities in advance of emerging natural disasters. At the time, I did not know the extent to which my Fulbright Specialist award to Nepal would create a long-lasting partnership between myself, colleagues in Kathmandu, and undergraduate students in Colorado. What essentially began as a stand-alone fellowship to Nepal would evolve into a collaborative, transnational initiative to embed students in engaged field work on important disaster risk reduction (DDR) alongside colleagues in Kathmandu. By leaning on existing resources, we were able to leverage the Fulbright Specialist grant to provide exciting study abroad opportunities for a group of predominantly

first-generation students in Colorado and Kathmandu. Approximately 42% of students at our institution identify as the first person in their family to attend college and many tend to be in lower income brackets and thus not on equal footing with their peers.

THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE US-NEPAL PARTNERSHIP

Building upon a strong track record of international collaboration, in 2017, Nepalese scholar and local leader Dr. Ram Thapaliya lobbied the Fulbright Commission to bring me as a Fulbright Specialist to Kathmandu to help ICMS on a municipalities mapping project in earthquake prone areas of Nepal. Dr. Thapaliya was himself a Fulbright Alumni, and could therefore personally attest to the role this program played in helping him succeed, not only as an educator, but as a future Nepalese diplomat. Dr. Thapaliya's proposal was awarded, and on December 15th after flying back home from a field course with students to the Rupununi region of Guyana, I received a phone call from World Learning, the administering agency for the Fulbright Specialist program, who shared news with me about the Fulbright opportunity in Kathmandu. Having been a past recipient of Fulbright Hays and Fulbright Scholar grants, I could not believe my good fortune, and my first thought was on how to include students in the upcoming journey to Asia. I had seen the way in which past field experiences--whether in the US or abroad--had changed my students' lives through firsthand, visceral experiences, and I was eager to connect undergraduates to our partners in Nepal.

Given the ambitious nature of the GIS mapping project in Kavre-Palanchok, Dr. Thapaliya and I decided to expand its scope to include other participants from the US who could add expertise to the mapping expedition. My students at University of Northern Colorado (UNC) have strong Geographic Information System (GIS) and field research skills, given the nature of our experiential undergraduate program, so they were a natural fit for the job. By February 2018, our small team effort had evolved into a transnational expedition, and we designed a three-credit course for the ten UNC students who would assist with the project in the Kathmandu Valley. Because 42% of my students identify as first-generation scholars with a limited resource base, I decided to write a proposal to underwrite the costs of our expedition, which would in turn support the pilot project in Kavre-Palanchok and partial travel costs for students. To my surprise, the Hewitt Institute of Colorado generously awarded nearly \$20,000 in support for the expedition. By June 2018, Dr. Thapaliya, his son Subash Thapaliya and I had organized a full-fledged expedition that harnessed the skills and expertise of not one, but two postsecondary institutions. Grant support also enabled us to bring UNC paleoclimatologist Dr. Jim Doerner along on the expedition to assist with student logistics and deliver a lecture on natural hazards at ICMS.

We were fortunate in that wherever we went, doors seemed to open to help advance our efforts in the field. Using our local connections with Fulbright, we were able to create synergies that benefited not only American scholars but also professionals and village leaders in the Kavre-Palanchok valley.

Fulbright alumni know well that study abroad provides enormous tangible and intangible benefits for awardees and host nations when designed in a manner that creates a mutual understanding for both parties. International fieldwork cannot be one sided. When Senator Fulbright launched his flagship Fulbright program after World War II in 1946, he did so with a clear goal in mind; that is, to create a *mutual understanding* between people of the United States and other states around the globe. In 1976, reflecting on the program, Fulbright wrote: “International educational exchange is the most significant current project designed to continue the process of humanizing mankind to the point, we would hope, that men can learn to live in peace--eventually even to cooperate in constructive activities rather than compete in a mindless contest of mutual destruction. We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education.” Today, the Fulbright program is a bipartisan success story. It awards 8,000 grants annually, which includes 1,900 US students, 4,000 foreign students, 1,200 US scholars, and 900 visiting scholars, not to mention the several hundred teachers and professionals who participate in the diverse array of programs. I represent just one Fulbright awardee among thousands of scholars in the world, but it was important for me to pay my grant forward by allowing students to experience firsthand the value of the flagship program. I also believed that student participation in the Nepal expedition would encourage some participants to apply for their own international fellowships upon graduation, or to seek out international experiences that aligned with their career goals.

Fulbright alumni know well that study abroad provides enormous tangible and intangible benefits for awardees and host nations when designed in a manner that creates a mutual understanding for both parties.

FIELD EXPERIENCES IN NEPAL

Students at UNC underwent rigorous academic preparation in advance of their travel to Kathmandu, many of them never having traveled outside the US before. We managed to assemble a diverse team of participants including those majoring in Geography, GIS, Anthropology, History, Education, Sustainability Studies, Sports and Exercise Science, and Geology. The team - composed of both undergraduates and graduates - also reflected a broad age range and wide economic demographic cohort. Despite calling Colorado home, several students had no experience working in mountain environments, and so fieldwork proved challenging but rewarding for these emerging scholars. Helping to facilitate the process was the ICMS group itself--a team of indispensable Nepalese and international graduate students and Research

Fellows including Subash Thapaliya, Shyam Thapa, Rony McGown, Lucy Donnelly, Bidhya Lohani, Satish Baidya, Ambu Khanal, and Major Bhadra Thakuri. On the ground in the Kavre-Palanchok region our field group was aided by the translation expertise of local citizens such as Badri Paudyal and Narayan Blon. It is not possible to include all of the human effort that went into creating a successful project, so this list remains incomplete, but it was clear that our small project had broadened by drawing from our existing social capital in the region.

Based at the Sunkoshi Retreat, ICMS Chairman and Professor Ram Thapaliya and his staff provided exemplary accommodations for our team, which proved a good respite after intensive days navigating the field. Students were tasked with conducting interviews on security and vulnerability in the Kavre area using survey questions designed in part by Nepal's Minister of Agriculture. Together our team mapped 130 household coordinates using GPS and Collector, snapping photographs for cartographic data, and traversing the challenging topography of the Kavre-Palanchok region. Interview and GIS data were recorded by our transnational team and the GIS was created by UNC students and GIS analysts. We produced maps that indicated the highest sites of vulnerability during natural disasters, which would be folded into long term planning documents. During our time in the country our transnational team put in long, difficult days in an altogether new environment, yet most thrived in the face of uncertainty and enjoyed challenges that come with navigating new terrain.

In addition to these tasks for ICMS, UNC students were responsible for creating final projects to be presented back in Colorado, part of the agreement for being awarded funds from the Hewitt grant. While ICMS graduate students needed to meet separate requirements for their institution, UNC students produced a diverse array of interdisciplinary projects for their final grade that were rooted in their academic disciplines: (1) Several participants completed projects on Nepal's UNESCO heritage sites, many of which we visited during our time in Nepal; (2) Geology student participants focused their work on landslide activity near the Tibetan border; (3) GIS majors developed interactive ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute Story Maps) and lesson plans on mapping social vulnerability; and (4) One graduate student created a podcast for UNC's podcast program "Bear in Mind, which includes "voices from the field" and student reactions to the expedition. This same student also created a video production highlighting his drone footage from our research in the Kathmandu Valley. His media project showed the extent to which our expedition impacted the lives of students as well as their future plans after completing college at UNC. Because of their embedded experiences in the country, two student participants applied for graduate school at the Institute for Crisis Management in order to study Disaster Risk Reduction alongside Nepalese students and research fellows.

UNC professor Jim Doerner and I also gave several lectures at ICMS, providing a great opportunity to work with Nepalese graduate students and exchange knowledge of natural hazards and risk reduction in the US and Nepal. Given the similar mountain environments of Nepal and Colorado's Front Range, there are some natural synergies between both our regions and postsecondary institutions. We were able to draw comparisons between both universities and also discuss the potential for longer term collaborations. Several project extensions were generated during our stay including: (1) a direct exchange between our universities, which would allow UNC and ICMS students to engage in international study and research; (2) a UNC workshop on natural hazards and disaster response run by Subash Thapaliya; and (3) the development of a USID grant funded project designed to map vulnerability in Nepal upon completion of the Swiss Red Cross proposal. In the wake of my Fulbright experience, Dr. Thapaliya appointed me the Visiting Researcher at ICMS, allowing us to continue our ongoing partnership between Nepal and Colorado, US.

CONCLUSION

In my experience, Fulbright fellowships provide immeasurable consequences, both intended and unintended. They allow faculty and students to embed themselves in the field in pursuit of scholarly work that makes a difference in the lives of local communities. In our case, the research project in the Kathmandu Valley was driven by Nepalese people in the wake of one of the most profound natural hazards in the country's history. We did not drive the agenda, but rather played one small part in a larger constellation of national projects designed to help Nepal recover from the environmental and social impacts of disasters. While our project assisted the people of Nepal in their disaster recovery, it also transformed the lives of the student participants themselves. Lifelong partnerships and friendships were formed and solidified, and some of our Kathmandu partners have since applied to graduate programs in the United States. The field course and Fulbright project to Kavre-Palanchok was not just a course, but a project that allowed us to kickstart a long-term friendship with our colleagues in Kathmandu. I can say that the team at ICMS - led by Dr. Thapaliya, Subash Thapaliya, Lt. Gen (Retd.) Balananda Sharma - are no longer just colleagues, but they are part of our extended family. The level of resilience and optimism among Nepalese people, even in the face of adverse circumstances such as Gorkha, will continue to motivate and inspire us. I am grateful for the personal and professional relationships we

have created and look forward to new collaborations as the next steps unfold. For example, one key outcome of the Nepal project was the formation of regional networks, such as a Fulbright Specialist fellowship to Bangladesh which will focus on transboundary plastics pollution in the Bay of Bengal.

In the four years since I completed the Fulbright Specialist grant to Nepal, I've watched my own students from this expedition flourish as they navigate their careers in the fields of geography, sustainability, and GIS. Some UNC alumni were able to use their experience from the mapping expedition to secure full time careers as GIS analysts for municipal or county agencies, while others have taken posts with Homeland Security or the United States Peace Corps. Many are now eligible to join the ranks of the US Exchange Alumni program, which provides an active professional network for those who have participated and completed a US government funded or sponsored exchange program. It is energizing to watch these former students thrive--whether in the US or Nepal--as they navigate their own careers in global environmental research and education. I maintain contact with all ten of these students and enjoy receiving texts, emails, and photos, especially those that reference our 2018 shared experience in Kathmandu. In 2023, we are hosting a class reunion in Colorado, where we'll eat *momos* from a local food truck and reflect on all that we learned in 2018-2019 while working in Nepal.

NOTES

1. An abbreviated video of the Fulbright field expedition may be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcPW1tCPBIU>
2. Information about the Institute for Crisis Management Studies and its programs may be found <https://www.tuicms.edu.np/>
3. Details for getting on the Fulbright Specialist roster in order to apply for open projects may be found <https://fulbrightspecialist.worldlearning.org/>
4. T. H. Poiani, R. Dos Santos Rocha, L. C. Degrossi and J. Porto De Albuquerque, "Potential of Collaborative Mapping for Disaster Relief: A Case Study of OpenStreetMap in the Nepal Earthquake 2015," *2016 49th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS)*, Koloa, HI, US, 2016, pp. 188-197, doi: 10.1109/HICSS.2016.31.
5. University of Arkansas Special Collections. J. William Fulbright Papers, MS/F956/144



UNC-ICMS Fulbright Specialist Team, December
2018, Photo Credit: Dannon Cox

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Barton is a Professor of Geography, GIS, and Sustainability at the University of Northern Colorado. Her research focuses on community resilience and deep adaptation in the wake of environmental disasters and global climate change. Her fieldwork in West Africa has been supported by Fulbright, NEH, and the Red Cross. She was recently selected as a Fellow for Cohort 7 of Homeward Bound, a global leadership initiative for women in science. In 2022, Barton was awarded the Senegalese Knighthood of the Order of the Joola for helping to bring the story of Senegal's largest humanitarian maritime disaster to American audiences. Her Fulbright Specialist grant to Nepal took place in 2018-2019 and Barton can be reached at karen.barton@unco.edu for anyone interested in learning more about the program.

HOW FULBRIGHT BELIEVED IN ME WHEN NO ONE ELSE DID, AND HOW I HAD TO BREAK THE MOLD TO PASS THIS GIFT ON

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ABSTRACT

The Fulbright program changed my life. As a blind woman who spent six years homeless, I struggled to find anyone who would invest in me. In 2017, Fulbright sent me to America to study for my Masters. In 2022, I received a ‘Fulbright in the Classroom’ grant, a welcome opportunity to give back—but to do so, I had to invent a new model to reach people with disabilities around the world.

Keywords: disability • accessibility • webinar • inclusion • community



STREET SMARTS

Before I was a Fulbright scholar, I was homeless. Born in a rural Tamazight community in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, I grew up outcast and orphaned, shuffled from home to home and forced to do domestic work until the age of 17, when I was blinded by a family member and abandoned in the hospital.

I started school for the first time that same year. I’d had no previous education and didn’t even know how to read, but I learned Braille in a night and a day, picked up French and Standard Arabic in less than a year, and completed twelve years of schooling in six—all while homeless.

After graduation, I rented a room with financial support from an American couple. I attended Moulay Ismail University and earned an Associate’s degree in English literature, then went to Mohamed V and earned a Bachelor’s degree in applied linguistics. I started applying for a Fulbright in 2013, encouraged by a taxi driver. This wasn’t unusual: most of the people who supported me while I was homeless had been taxi drivers.

At the time, I didn’t understand what a Fulbright was. I thought it was a local scholarship, and that I’d be competing against a few dozen fellow Moroccans at most. Little did I know—and I’m grateful that I didn’t—that I was up against thousands of applicants from all around the globe. If I’d understood that, I might not have bothered to apply. As it was, I faced mockery, even from some whom I’d thought would support me. The application process was a waste of my time, they maintained. I didn’t listen.

Only later did it dawn on me, as I was taking the TOEFL and the GRE and sitting through multiple rounds of interviews, that the Fulbright might actually be a big deal.

In retrospect, my ignorance and emotional detachment from the process most likely worked in my favor. When an interviewer asked what I would do if I didn't get the Fulbright, I replied, "I've got plenty of things to do. That's not really your business!"

They also asked what I would do if I *did* get a Fulbright. Unlike the other questions, I took this one seriously. To this day, I still clearly remember dictating the following words: "If I get the Fulbright, I'll use the opportunity to start my own media platform and tell untold stories about people like myself, people with disabilities, who've been left behind."

The morning of my very last interview, on my way out the door, I stumbled over a hot stove that a roommate, jealous of my aspirations, had strategically placed on the threshold. The metal scorched my leg, which blistered from ankle to knee. I went to the interview anyway but didn't hike up my dress to reveal what had happened until the interviewer asked why I was so distracted. "Go home," he told me. "You're okay. I think we can be done."

A short time later, I left the country for Malaysia. I didn't think I'd get the Fulbright, and I wasn't even planning to return to Morocco. As it happened, I was wrong on both counts. Unexpected circumstances brought me back in spring of 2017, and when I landed, I was greeted with the news that I was now a Fulbright scholar.

To this day, the shock and the joy of that moment are a highwater mark in my life.

I spent the summer getting rid of everything I owned and, in July, boarded a plane bound for a place whose name I'd never heard, a place I suspected might not even be part of America, a place where I would earn my Master's degree in journalism and strategic media, connect with an elderly American couple who've become just like family, and meet my future husband. That place is Arkansas.

FULBRIGHT, TECHNOLOGY, TUMORS, AND ME

I landed at XNA Regional Airport with no plan, no money, and (of course) no eyes. I hadn't eaten in forty-eight hours, and I had no idea how to get from the airport to the apartment that my Fulbright advisor had rented for me.

Unbeknownst to me, while I was crossing the Atlantic, one of my friends in Morocco had posted on Facebook, asking for someone to greet me in Arkansas. When I stepped off the escalator, a man approached me and asked, "Are you Itto?" I said I was. He said, "Come with me." Too exhausted to resist, I did as I was told.

This man, as it happened, knew a lot of Fulbright scholars, and had hosted many international students in his home. On the way to my apartment, we stopped at a store. He bought me an iPhone. He told me to save his contact info, and even though I knew what the words “save” and “contact info” meant, I had no idea what to do. I started to cry. He thought I was afraid to live alone and asked if I wanted to stay with him and his wife instead. I shook my head no. “I’ve been on my own all my life,” I said. “I just can’t save your contact. This phone doesn’t have Braille. It’s not for the blind.”

I’d heard of screen readers and completed my undergraduate thesis on them, but I’d never had a chance to use one. I didn’t know that this phone came with VoiceOver built in.

The man, whom I now call my American father, promised that I would learn to use the phone. He showed me how to turn VoiceOver on so I could start exploring on my own. Then he added that he’d do some research and teach me everything he learned.

In the coming weeks and months and years, he and many other people helped me bridge the gap from total ignorance to expertise. I mastered smartphones, computers, and Braille displays and inspired everyone who helped me along the way.

Of course, it wasn’t just technology that I had to learn from scratch. Despite all the courses I’d taken on English, American culture, and the American education system, I knew a lot less than I thought I did. I could speak fluently about Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophical treatise “On Being and Nothingness,” but I’d never learned everyday words like “aluminum foil” and often went without basic necessities because I didn’t know how to find them at Walmart. I knew that dress codes in the US weren’t as strict as in Morocco, but I wasn’t sure where American freedoms ended and once went to my neighbors to ask for help reading my mail while wearing nothing but a bra and underwear! Last but not least, though I’d managed to navigate the byzantine, French-style education system in Morocco, the American system still managed to confuse me: when I saw there was a class called “History of the Black Press,” for example, I signed up for it eagerly expecting to learn how black newspaper ink was manufactured!

The challenges didn’t stop coming, but as time went on, I grew increasingly cultural hybridized and confident in my ability to navigate America. As an extrovert, I made friends with everyone, from the volunteers who came to read to me, to strangers on buses, to Paratransit drivers, to my fellow Fulbright scholars.

In summer of 2019, I made yet another friend. I’d written my thesis and was looking for someone to help me revise it, and a fellow Fulbrighter, Tri Murniati, referred me to someone who used to tutor at my university writing center. We connected on Facebook, and one afternoon, he came to my apartment. We started by discussing my thesis, but before long, we found

ourselves talking about everything from overcoming trauma, to cultivating psychological objectivity, to Jean-Paul Sartre. Up to that point, even with all the friends I'd made, I'd struggled to find people who would challenge me intellectually. Mekiya was able and willing to do so. I was overjoyed.

At the time, I didn't realize that I'd actually met him once before, two years earlier, the day after I'd landed in Arkansas. Apparently, he sat beside me at the welcome dinner for my Fulbright cohort. Even after he told me, I didn't remember. Nor did I know then that three years later, we'd get married. He would take my last name, and together we created the international media platform I wrote about on my Fulbright application. The DateKeepers is the realization of my longest-standing dream: to practice journalism for the good of people who've been left behind. At the time, I knew none of this. All I knew was that I made a friend.

I was supposed to graduate that year, but my body had other plans. For much of 2019, while attempting to prepare my thesis, I'd been distracted by a chronic and excruciating pain. At first, I was told it was psychosomatic, a delayed response to trauma, but then two tumors were discovered in my hip. I had to have surgery. This delayed my thesis defense to 2020.

I was still feeling the effects of the operation when the pandemic hit, and I had to go into quarantine. To counter the sudden social isolation, I took advantage of my hard-won technological fluency by going online and connecting with Fulbrighters based around the world. I also found myself involved in online conversations about disability and digital accessibility, which had been sparked by the world's sudden pivot to online work and school. As time went on, these two threads wove together in my head until, in April of 2021, with support from John Bader, Christine Oswald, and other members of the Fulbright Association, I founded Fulbrighters with Disabilities, a global, virtual chapter dedicated to passing on the gifts that the Fulbright has given me and supporting students and scholars with disabilities all around the world.

FULBRIGHT IN THE CLASSROOM, A COMMUNITY EFFORT

Every year, the Fulbright Association awards the 'Fulbright in the Classroom' grant to one of its alumni. The purpose of this grant is to raise awareness about the opportunities the Fulbright offers in underrepresented communities. Traditionally, the grant recipient visits three educational institutions that serve impoverished and marginalized communities and hosts information sessions about Fulbright for the students there. Applicants for the grant must specify which schools they're going to visit and how their information sessions will help underrepresented students and scholars.

In 2022, I was awarded the 'Fulbright in the Classroom' grant. In my application, I never specified which schools I would visit. Instead, I took a different tack: one that, as far as I know, had never been done before.

Having navigated everything from homelessness to a Master's of Arts program while totally blind, I'm familiar with the many types of barriers that people with disabilities face worldwide. In every country, those of us with disabilities are, on average, less physically and socially mobile than our non-disabled peers. We experience higher rates of poverty, worse health outcomes, more social isolation, lower rates of employment, and lower rates of education. Often, we're excluded from educational institutions altogether, if not explicitly, by dint of law, then implicitly, by lack of financial resources and inaccessible infrastructure that prevents us from traveling to brick-and-mortar schools.

To circumvent some of these barriers, I decided that I wouldn't visit brick-and-mortar schools, either. Instead, I hosted three virtual classrooms, which students and scholars with disabilities could attend from anywhere in the world as long as they had access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone with a working internet connection.

Once again, Fulbright took a chance on me, and once again, it paid off for both of us. I can't take sole credit, though. These virtual sessions were community efforts. I chose a screen-reader-accessible platform for videoconferencing, but to ensure that people with different disabilities felt welcome, I had to consult with others. I was supported in these recruitment efforts by Geghie Davis, Mark Bookman, Frank Mondelli, and Istou Diallo, then the board members of Fulbrighters with Disabilities. To make the sessions accessible for participants who are D/deaf or hard of hearing, Colleen Germain volunteered to provide CART services, and Sara Lynn Thelen volunteered to provide sign language interpretation. On one occasion, when Sara wasn't able to attend, one of the participants even jumped in and provided interpretation.

Since the Fulbright offers many different programs for which attendees might apply, I recruited my fellow alumni Geghie Davis, Miso Kwak, and Mounir Rafik to speak about their experiences navigating different programs, such as the open study/research awards and the ETA, with and without disabilities.

By presenting this ensemble cast to the attendees, I also aimed to dispel the idea that the Fulbright isn't *for* people with disabilities. Many of us struggle with internalized ableism, stigma, and shame and don't bother to apply for such prestigious opportunities, believing they're beyond our reach. A critical part of my mission, over and above sharing technical information about how to apply for a Fulbright and navigate physical and cultural barriers, was to challenge this notion and let attendees know that there *is* hope for them, there *are* opportunities, if they can muster the courage to put themselves out there.

Time zones presented an additional barrier. To reach as many people as possible, I hosted each session on a different day of the week and at a different time. I even scheduled one at 8:00 p.m. my time. Everyone who knows me knows that I usually wake up at 3:00 a.m. and run out of energy

by 5:00 in the evening. I have Mekiya to thank for supplying me with a steady stream of coffee that night so I could function. He also provided technical support, moderating the sessions, admitting attendees, and muting and unmuting participants so I could concentrate on giving my presentation without also using my screen reader.

Even with the sessions held at different times, there were still people who, for one reason or another, couldn't attend. To accommodate them, we've made recordings of the sessions available. In lieu of participating in the Q&A, anyone with questions is encouraged to reach out to Fulbrighters with Disabilities at fwd@fulbright.org.

Though we lacked the benefit of an established playbook, we achieved everything I hoped to achieve, reaching hundreds of students and scholars with disabilities around the world, creating a welcoming, inclusive, accessible virtual environment for them, and showcasing the diverse opportunities the Fulbright offers. I want to thank the Fulbright Program and Association for always believing in me, for trusting me to craft and deliver an encouraging message to aspiring, disadvantaged students and scholars, and for investing, not just in me, but in people with disabilities around the world. I also want to thank Fulbrighters with Disabilities, everyone who volunteered to help with the virtual classrooms, and last but not least, my loving husband for committing their time and energy, throwing their support behind me, and making this one of the best experiences I had in 2022.

Though we lacked the benefit of an established playbook, we achieved everything I hoped to achieve, reaching hundreds of students and scholars with disabilities around the world, creating a welcoming, inclusive, accessible virtual environment for them, and showcasing the diverse opportunities the Fulbright offers

NOTES

1. To learn more about Itto's journey, read her [interview with ABILITY Magazine](#) or listen to her [interview with Blind Abilities Podcast](#).
2. For more information about Fulbrighters with Disabilities, visit the chapter's [website](#) or read "Fulbrighters with Disabilities: Launch" and "[FORWARD: Fulbrighters with Disabilities Breaks New Ground, Leaves No One Behind](#)."
3. To learn more about the structural barriers faced by people with disabilities worldwide, read the World Health Organization's page on disability [here](#).

BIOGRAPHY

Itto Outini became a Fulbright grantee in 2017 and completed her M.A. in the US in 2020. She's worked as a journalist in the US and Morocco, publishing with outlets including The Chicago Tribune, UNDP's People for 2030 Blog, and ABILITY Magazine. Her life story has also been featured on BBC. In 2021, she founded Fulbrighters with Disabilities, a global, virtual chapter of the Fulbright Association, and in 2022, she and her husband Mekiya co-founded The DateKeepers, an international media platform committed to publishing untold stories and highlighting well-lived lives, especially those of people with disabilities, advocates, and allies around the world. Itto and Mekiya now live in Kansas City, Missouri, where they're curating *The DateKeepers* and working together on Itto's forthcoming memoir, *Blindness is the Light of My Life*. Itto can be reached at itto.outini@gmail.com

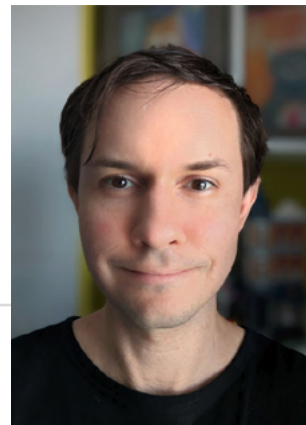
FULBRIGHT FELLOW TO FULBRIGHT FACULTY: MY CIRCUITOUS PASSAGE FROM CHENGDU TO HO CHI MINH CITY

MARK E. FRANK

ABSTRACT

Over the past five years, I went from being a Fulbright Research Fellow in China to becoming a member of the history faculty at Fulbright University Vietnam. I reflect on the barriers facing similar US exchanges with China today, and the new opportunities for intellectual exchange that Fulbright University Vietnam presents further south.

Keywords: China • Vietnam • international exchange • Covid-19



LIMBO, 2021

Sometimes, as my head throbbed after a night of teaching my East Asian history survey from the cruel hours of two fifteen to three forty-five in the morning, I would close my eyes and meditate on a scene I had only ever witnessed on Google Maps: a broad avenue bordering a crescent-shaped lake lined with foxtail palms—and behind the palms, a wall of glass panels imprinted with the words *Fulbright University Việt Nam*.

This was the fall of 2021, and I was newly serving on the faculty of a campus I had never visited in a country, Vietnam, that I had never experienced except through books, films, and the internet. Such was not the plan: like so many around the world, the pandemic left me in limbo, having quit a cushy postdoc, ended my lease, and sold my car, but unable to move abroad without long waits and a mountain of paperwork. As of that July, with the delta variant of Covid-19 raging in Vietnam and worldwide, I was signing on to Zoom faculty meetings from Connecticut hotel bathrooms and bidding my students in Ho Chi Minh City a good afternoon shortly after kissing my wife goodnight in a North Carolina AirBnB, or in the guest room of my parents' house.

Meanwhile, my students and colleagues in Ho Chi Minh City endured a nearly three-month martial lockdown aimed at returning to a state of zero viral transmissions. The Zoom meetings that kept me up through the night were for some a brief reprieve from the monotony of isolation. “How are you doing?” I made a point of asking my classes—out of concern, but also a genuine curiosity about the psychological effects of the lockdown. “How are you *feeling*?” They returned their sympathies when my eyelids visibly drooped,

or when I yawned and grew confused. One of my more thoughtful students, incredulous that I was teaching classical Chinese at three in the morning, polled her classmates on their availability and arranged to move our sessions up by several hours. Classes and emails were full of such compassionate gestures, but the dialogue was limited outside of scheduled class sessions. This was the latest in a series of episodes that left me feeling like time was foreclosing on opportunities for international exchange. Six years earlier, as a Fulbright fellow in China, the mood was very different.

CHENGDU, 2015

In 2015 a Henry Luce-ACLS grant and a Fulbright Research Fellowship sent me to the city of Chengdu in southwest China, where my family settled into a workaday *xiaoqu*, an urban apartment community centered around a courtyard where neighbors gossiped and children played. We enrolled our daughter in a neighborhood kindergarten. She quickly learned her Chinese name and picked up *Putonghua* (standard Chinese); her teacher urged us to speak Chinese with her at home, though neither my partner nor I were native speakers. After school drop-offs, I rode our hot pink electric scooter for thirty minutes to the Sichuan Provincial Archives where I leafed through handwritten letters on brittle *xuan* paper or scrolled through digitized documents on LCD screens in the reading room. I sometimes wandered over to the nearby Parasol Tree Café during hours-long lunchtime closures at the archives. If I timed it right, I got to pet the two alpacas who lived in a pen next door.

My goal at the archives was to uncover the history of Xikang, a short-lived Chinese province (1939-1955) that few people anywhere still remember. The reading room at the Sichuan Provincial Archives was a jovial place where staff conversed or watched videos on their phones while researchers mingled and sometimes peered in on other desks to see the archival catch of the day. The contacts I made in the archives proved transformative—none more so than Songsong, a local master's student who turned out to be one of the few people as obsessed with Xikang Province as I was. It so happened that Songsong was contributing research to a project that interested me tremendously: the first official publication of the *Xikang tongzhi gao*, an unfinished manuscript for a provincial gazetteer on government affairs in Xikang. Songsong later sent me a copy of the two-volume set after I returned to the US. My dissertation would not have been the same without these marvelously detailed but difficult-to-obtain volumes; I've ported them around the world so that they're always on hand while I write.

In the spirit of what people at the US State Department like to call “citizen diplomacy,” I talked with everyone I could and accepted nearly every invitation, personal or professional. As part of a TEDx event hosted by a local school, I spoke on the importance of thinking critically about the meaning of “culture.” I gave another talk about “Academic Freedom and its Limits in the United States” at the US Consulate-General in Chengdu, drawing on my

own observations of the notorious un-hiring of Steven Salaita, an acerbic critic of Israel, at the University of Illinois. Various friends adopted me for the lunar New Year holiday in the city of Leshan, hosted me at an eco-lodge in the high grasslands of western Sichuan, and gave me a tour of small coffee roasteries in Jianshui, Yunnan. The connections and reconnections I made in the archives, in my *xiaoqu*, and all over Sichuan were real and lasting.

Today, that experience is unrepeatable: as part of what I consider a deeply misguided response to China's treatment of Hong Kong, the Trump administration moved to terminate the Fulbright China program in 2020. The following year, reacting to US criticism of China, the PRC permanently closed the US consulate in Chengdu and evicted its personnel. Of course, the pandemic has only widened the gulf. In February 2020, a friend of mine, a professor at Appalachian State University, was in Beijing when an alarming message appeared in one of his WeChat groups: by order of the Department of State, current Fulbrighters in China were to leave the country immediately. At the time, living in China seemed like a health risk. Ironically, the pandemic would ultimately kill over a million people in the United States, whereas the PRC's zero-Covid-19 policy kept casualties there extraordinarily low, at least until certain measures were lifted this year. It also practically sealed that country off from the outside world.

Meanwhile, the dissertation that I researched in China generated several article publications and helped me to secure a postdoc at Yale and then a faculty position at Fulbright University Vietnam, but the thought of living so near China without being able to visit it any time soon was heartbreaking. As 2021 came to an end, I was beginning to seriously question whether I would even make it to Vietnam. The fatigue and hotel costs were mounting. On the other side of the Pacific, FUV students were understandably frustrated to be missing out on the everyday, unmediated face-to-face interactions that are supposed to be at the heart of a liberal arts education. Some deferred their matriculation or took leaves of absence.

I did my best to acculturate in absentia to my future home. I devoured Christopher Goscha's wonderful *Vietnam: A New History*. I asked my students about their daily lives. I learned that the avenue bordering our campus, Tôn Dật Tiên, was named after a revolutionary figure I often discussed in class, known to many English-speakers as "Sun Yat-sen." In December, Vietnam relaxed its entry requirements. I bought airline tickets.

Then, two weeks before our scheduled departure, my entire family tested positive for Covid-19. We had to cancel our flights and wait until we tested negative. Reaching Vietnam felt like a Sisyphean task. I found it increasingly difficult to picture the finish line.

HO CHI MINH CITY, 2022

This is the scene I wish I could have shown myself at that moment. It's the morning of May 7, 2022, and hundreds—*hundreds*—of undergraduates and their friends from provinces up and down the S-shaped map of Vietnam are jogging, running, sprinting away from the reopened campus of Fulbright University Vietnam. They traveled through lush Hồ Bán Nguyệt Park, and back again along Tôn Dật Tiên avenue to a finish line erected just outside the lower floor of our small campus, where student art and design projects are on display to the public—all part of fundraising “fun run” that our Office of Student Development promoted as “the FIRST AND BIGGEST festival for Fulbright community to come together, in person” since the onset of the pandemic. I am among the runners, keeping pace with most of the community but easily lapped by Sven, the visiting Classics professor from Germany who runs twice this distance every morning before coffee.

While student bands perform on an outdoor stage, I skip upstairs to the common area, a space that recently hosted a talk by former Secretary of State John Kerry and that is now occupied by a group of prospective applicants visiting from Đồng Nai province. Slipping past the high schoolers, I grab my water bottle from the communal faculty office that I share with our two dozen faculty members, who hail from Vietnam, Thailand, Australia, Germany, and the United States (among other places), and who, despite varying levels of experience, are for the time being separated by no ranks or walls in this office. By my American state university standards, our campus is tiny, but I know it's the germ of something bigger—a space where we put our heads together with our students, the most senior of whom are officially designated as the university “Co-Designers,” to plan a sustainable liberal arts curriculum that we can port to our new 15-hectare (37 acres) “green campus” in District 9, hopefully near the end of this year.

Our status as the world's only “Fulbright University” can lend itself to misperceptions about the nature of the institution. While FUV has generous financial support from the US federal government and roots in the Fulbright Economics Teaching Program pioneered by the Harvard Kennedy School, it is neither an American University (or satellite campus) nor directly related to the US Fulbright Program. The vast majority of our faculty and staff and nearly all of our students are Vietnamese citizens, although most faculty hold a doctorate from the United States. In truth, we are not “The Fulbright University of Vietnam” (as the school is sometimes mistakenly called by American interlocutors), but simply, Fulbright University Vietnam, a young, private Vietnamese-chartered university with an American-style liberal arts program and a master's program in Public Policy.

During my first year here, like most of my colleagues, I've already played a significant role in redesigning the undergraduate curriculum and updating the curriculum for my major. Our first class is scheduled to graduate in June. As faculty warned when I interviewed for the position, here at FUV we are "building the airplane while flying it."

On my way back down the stairs, I pass behind the glass panels imprinted with the words *Fulbright University Việt Nam*, and beneath that, a quote by J. William Fulbright, a belated but passionate opponent of the American war in Vietnam, which reads: "We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy, and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education." I wish I could somehow broadcast this whole grand scene to the despairing me of yesteryear.

THE FUTURE OF FULBRIGHT

As I revise this essay in early 2023, I am currently head of the history program and assistant professor of East Asian history here at Fulbright. Nothing has shaped my approach to these roles more than my experience as a Fulbright Research Fellow in China, which is why it's devastating to think that the age of Fulbright in China has ended. Similar funding opportunities have evaporated, too: the Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship was discontinued in 2022 after a quarter-century run, and the Luce/ACLS grant that I received for pre-dissertation research in China has not been offered since 2019. The PRC may be slowly re-opening to the rest of the world, but how many young scholars in the United States will be able to take advantage of China's re-opening?

This is a dire problem for the United States, but also for the world: the quality of scholarship at American institutions has created an international demand for US-trained historians and other humanists and social scientists, including, of course, here in Southeast Asia. We're now facing a generation of doctoral candidates with few opportunities for long-term research in the PRC outside of a handful of wealthy schools. And not for lack of demand: there have been numerous forceful calls to restore the Fulbright China program, including a letter from the Association of Asian Studies and an eloquent article for *The China Project* by Elizabeth Lynch, one of the first Fulbright fellows in China. Lynch writes that the misguided elimination of the China Fulbright program has only degraded American understanding of China and made it "easier for mutual enemies to bring the two countries deeper into conflict."

It's hard not to draw contrasts with Saigon, where the founding of Fulbright University Vietnam highlights the potential of intellectual exchange for mutual understanding and the normalization of diplomatic relations between former enemies. Apart from historical research, what unites my two major "Fulbright" experiences is the spirit of kindling wisdom, empathy, and perception. For the United States to forgo that approach to China would be a mistake.

What unites my two major "Fulbright" experiences is the spirit of kindling wisdom, empathy, and perception.

Vietnam, of course, has its own historical sensitivities toward its neighbor to the north, which my students seem to view with a mix of resentment and fascination. If there is one key insight from my experience as a China Fulbrighter that I bring to my work here, it's that there is no one China—China just isn't a monolith that we can wrap our minds around. To build understanding is not to "understand China," because what would that even mean? For my Vietnamese students who, like my American students, often feel overwhelmed by the "Middle Country" monolith, this can be a liberating realization and a gateway to thinking about Chinese people, past and present, on their own terms and in their own times.

NOTES

1. Fulbright University Vietnam (FUV) is a private university chartered in Vietnam, with considerable support from the US and Vietnamese governments. It is not formally linked to the Fulbright exchange programs. FUV admitted its first undergraduate students in 2018 and is the only liberal arts university in Vietnam. Its mission is "to inspire new generations of leaders and ambitious thinkers of diverse origin to serve Vietnamese society and contribute to a better world." You can read more about it here: <https://fulbright.edu.vn/origin-story/>.
2. For an informal overview of Xikang Province based in part on my archival research, see Mark Frank, "Lost Province: China's Xikang, now Tibet and Sichuan, is turning 80. But few people realize it ever existed," The China Project, December 26, 2018, url: <https://thechinaproject.com/2018/12/26/lost-province-chinas-xikang-now-tibet-and-sichuan-is-turning-80/>.
3. For a brief overview of the Fulbright China Program and its untimely demise, see here: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/the-cost-of-ending-fulbright-in-china/>.
4. On the closing of the Chengdu consulate, see here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/24/world/asia/china-us-consulate-chengdu.html>.

5. Christopher Goscha (2019), *Vietnam: A New History*, New York: Basic Books. This book is a worthwhile read for anyone with an interest in Vietnamese history: <https://www.basicbooks.com/titles/christopher-goscha/vietnam/9780465094370/>.



Mark E. Frank lecturing at the US consulate in Chengdu, China in 2017.

BIOGRAPHY

Mark E. Frank is a faculty member in History and the major coordinator for the History program at Fulbright University Vietnam, where he teaches courses on East Asian history, environmental history, and the global humanities. He is the recipient of a 2015-16 Fulbright Research Fellowship for mainland China, where he was based in the city of Chengdu. Before joining Fulbright, he held short-term teaching positions at Yale University, Wesley College (Delaware), and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is currently developing a book on the environmental history of Chinese frontiers in the early twentieth century. Email: mark.frank@fulbright.edu.vn

A FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCE: THE IRONY OF AN EVENT

ROSINA CLAUDIA KRECEK

ABSTRACT

My first public health teacher was my mother, a nurse in underserved communities of southern Florida, US. Her captivating cases of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) filled our evenings at home. Fifty years later, I prepared my keynote address, “One Health and NTDs” as a 2020 US Fulbright Specialist in Malaysia. Who would have predicted that my keynote, and the World Health Organization’s proclamation of the Covid-19 global pandemic would display on the same day?

Keywords: neglected tropical diseases • one health • public health • collaborative interdisciplinary teams



NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES: IMPORTANCE IN TODAY’S WORLD

As a 2020 US Fulbright Specialist in Malaysia, my remit was to address Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and mitigate them with a One Health approach. One Health emphasizes connections between animals, humans, and environmental health, and is defined as a collaborative interdisciplinary approach to optimal health. This approach shares similarities with traditional aspects of veterinary parasitology, including host-parasite relationships as well as the role of the environment. Planet Earth continues to amaze by supporting life for animals, eight billion humans, environments, and resources such as water and food. At the same time, 18 NTDs are responsible for illness in a billion people across 147 countries, and a second billion who live in abject poverty are at risk of contracting multiple NTDs across Asia, Africa, and the Americas. NTDs and public health problems that afflict Southeast (SE) Asia include mosquito-borne dengue, malaria, schistosomiasis, and lymphatic filariasis. NTDs are especially disabling amongst the socio-economically disadvantaged and neglected human populations. “An NTD anywhere is a threat everywhere!” Anonymous.

In 2008, the human population numbered 6.6 billion. By 2022, this reached eight billion, and by 2100 is projected to reach 11.2 billion (United Nations, 2022). This article will illustrate how the One Health approach mitigates NTDs. Today, more than ever, planet Earth is globally connected.

While NTDs challenge human and animal populations, it has also presented me with the privilege to learn from and teach many colleagues globally, while developing research programs and establishing life-long collaborations. For over 42 years, NTDs and the One Health approach have directed my research and teaching career in over 47 countries, largely in Africa, the Caribbean, and the US, and continue to open doors to study, teach, build, and maintain life-long collaborations.

Working in communities where NTDs are common requires One Health skills. In 2019-2020, I had the privilege to present two Keynote Addresses focused on One Health and NTDs. The first was “Demystifying One Health: Sifting and Winnowing the Role of Veterinary Parasitology” at the 27th Conference of the World Association for the Advancement of Veterinary Parasitology in Wisconsin, US. During this conference, several SE Asian colleagues attended and invited me to visit Malaysia to collaborate and build One Health programs with their universities and communities. This would be supported by the US Fulbright Specialist Program and entitled “Capacity Building in Research and Teaching Through Concepts of One Health.” The next ten months of preparation required regular online meetings to design project activities. One included the 56th Annual Scientific Conference keynote opening address of the Malaysian Society of Parasitology & Tropical Medicine (MSPTM), as well as training programs, seminars, and public lectures. Communications required adapting to time differences of 13-14 hours between us. I was honored to be awarded as a US Fulbright Specialist in SE Asia, which would allow me to collaborate with colleagues across the region, managing NTDs by applying a One Health approach, and building collaborative research programs. After nearly a year of preparation, I looked forward to meeting colleagues in Malaysia.

The MSPTM conference theme, “Neglected, Tropical and Vector Borne Diseases: The Evolution of One Health from Challenges to Solutions” combined the 56th Annual Scientific Conference of the MSPTM with the 3rd Asian Simuliidae Symposium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Colleagues from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, Nigeria, and the US attended the conference. The first event was my keynote opening address “How a One Health Approach Mitigates Neglected Tropical Diseases” on March 11, 2020.

ONE HEALTH APPROACH: ITS CRITICAL PLACE IN THE WORLD TODAY

Public health promotes the welfare of entire populations and endeavors to mitigate the spread of NTDs to improve human and animal health. It also shares many similarities with traditional aspects of veterinary parasitology including host-parasite relationships, as well as the role of the environment. The One Health approach is essential to public health and requires collaborating in teams with numerous skills. I learned early in life that this

is essential to improving the health of people, as well as animals including pets, livestock, production animals, free-ranging and captive wildlife, and the environment. The World Health Organization (WHO) goal expands One Health by designing and implementing programs, policies, legislation, and research throughout multiple sectors which communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes for the planet.

Because One Health is a team approach, its kaleidoscope of skills and disciplines encompass animal health, human health, environmental health, and parasitic organisms such as helminths, protozoa, bacteria, and viruses. Experts in public health, molecular biology, genetics, and epidemiology are critical as well as those in policy, advocacy, community, and education. Additionally, collaborative interdisciplinary teams require critical skills, partners, building trust, and a substantial investment of time. Habitually, our focus is on NTDs in developing countries, but developed nations are not without their challenges. Some global examples include vector borne diseases, emerging zoonoses, antibiotic resistance, insecticide resistance, veterinary parasitology, medical and forensic entomology, and medical microbiology.

Building and strengthening One Health teams is critical. But bringing teams together is easier said than done. After all, isn't it easier to "walk alone"? This reminds me of a proverb of the N'gambai people located in the 7-country bulge of West Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Nigeria) which includes a vast number of cultural groups and dialects. To collaborate across these wide-ranging areas, the N'gambai travel thousands of miles as they have throughout their history. One of their proverbs underscores the interdisciplinary approach. "If you want to travel fast, you travel alone. If you want to travel far, you travel together." As a result, they continue to successfully build and optimize long-term sustainable business transactions across this vast expanse.

HOW A FIVE-STEP APPROACH BUILDS SUCCESSFUL LONG-TERM ONE HEALTH PROGRAMS

Ten months passed before I traveled to Malaysia in March 2020. During this period, I strengthened collaborations with Malaysian colleagues and designed One Health programs to address a wide span of individuals including university students, communities, and political and government players. The overall goal was to enable all to participate, discuss and apply the One Health approach. Finally, we were ready to meet and move forward with planned activities.

Earlier in my career I developed five essential steps to apply the One Health approach. These are identifying societal needs, such as NTDs (i.e., malaria, dengue, etc.), building collaborations and interdisciplinary teams of stakeholders with critical skills, investing time to build trust and relationships with teams and stakeholders, building sustainable research, education, and outreach programs, and "measure well to manage well."

During this period, we also developed global collaborations interwoven with the NTDs, which included teaching veterinary and medical parasitology, research, and training programs focused on professional, undergraduate, and graduate students. I looked forward to learning how SE Asian countries manage their regions' burgeoning human populations, their priority research areas and projects, and how the NTDs are taught locally, regionally, and globally. SE Asian colleagues in this region work with neglected, tropical, and vector-borne diseases of greatest importance. The One Health model which I have developed includes how to successfully identify and mitigate societal needs and find solutions to these challenges.

Measuring the impact of these efforts requires robust tools such as evidence-based metrics to measure, manage, and increase the value gained by applying interventions to improve outcomes, reduce risks and optimize economic benefits. This is a pathway essential for applying the One Health approach to parasitological and medical challenges, determining which interventions and protocols will result in the greatest impact, reducing risk and disease at the human-animal environment interface, and ultimately provide greatest benefits to all stakeholders across the planet.

WHAT WAS THE IRONY OF THE EVENT?

Finally, March 11, 2020 arrived and the Conference was ready to begin. I was presenting the Keynote Opening Address entitled "How a One Health Approach Mitigates Neglected Tropical Diseases." I planned to emphasize the global presence of the NTDs especially when water safety, sanitation, and access to health care are insufficient.

Serendipitously, the WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, proclaimed the Covid-19 pandemic on the same day as my opening address. Now 36 months later, he has confirmed 758,390,564 cases globally and 6,859,093 deaths. However, the "irony of the event" on March 11, 2020, was that both Director-General Ghebreyesus and I presented parallel messages. He announced the pandemic, and I called for an interdisciplinary One Health approach to address the global NTDs. In retrospect, both of our messages highlighted the necessity of collaboration equally amongst all humans and countries, and the importance of an interdisciplinary approach globally to provide optimal health.

An unexpected outcome of the WHO pandemic announcement was the abrupt shortening of my visit to Malaysia. My colleagues and I swiftly had to identify alternative steps to respond to this unexpected turn-of-events and still complete our goals as we were preparing to return immediately following the conference. What an unanticipated message! The early departure was not only unexpected but truly a huge disappointment for our host and colleagues, as

well as my husband and me. As with any urgent situation, there is little time or opportunity to contemplate when taking immediate action. In our situation, it was to return straightaway to the US. I met with Malaysian colleagues to strategize a plan to continue our collaboration.

As our departure flight and return trip unfolded, I was able to “slow down” and begin to prioritize the collaborations we had initiated. This required “thinking out of the box.” How have we accomplished this in the past three years since Covid-19 changed our lives? Initially, I was reminded that we are professors, colleagues, and students from countries across the planet. We are all affected by global Covid-19, which has unexpectedly brought us closer. Strengthening One Health programs continues (Covid-19 or not) to be my major goal. Some unexpected initiatives and opportunities have been borne out of the pandemic. Our associations continue to strengthen. For example, when our SE Asian colleagues reached out planning the 2021 57th Malaysian Conference and seeking a One Health Keynote speaker for their conference, I introduced them to a One Health human medicine colleague who accepted the invitation. Not yet able to travel globally, we all “attended” this conference in a 13-14 hour time difference. One unexpected gain due to Covid-19 is that we have truly learned how to work productively online. Collaboration at all levels continue to grow beyond our original expectations. None of us globally has been free of the pandemic. As a result, we are closer together than ever, more attuned almost three years later.

REGROUP AND RESOLVE

WHO’s proclamation of the Covid-19 pandemic shortened the events planned in Malaysia with colleagues, students, and communities from across SE Asia. Time was curtailed as we regrouped to return to the US. Still, “Sometimes things happen for a reason”. However, some projects and goals were completed before departing Malaysia. Unfortunately, several anticipated activities were cancelled.

First, One Health and Biohealth training programs were developed specifically for SE Asian undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral students focused on skills addressing health-related problems. Second, during the conference, significant numbers of SE Asian next-generation colleagues reached out to me with queries about career guidance. Through social networking, these career guidance queries continue. Third, the Malaysian newspaper *New Straits Times* headline was “*Taenia solium* threatens even non-pork eaters” which highlighted my Keynote Opening to 80 tropical medicine specialists. This NTD causes 30% of global epilepsy in adults and children. This article underscored the threat of this parasite to global public health in SE Asia and has attracted significant interest from the public. Fourth, additional projects included revising current course curricula with undergraduate and postgraduate training in line with the One Health concept. Three years later we continue to resolve the impact of the NTDs.

NTDs ARE CRITICAL TO AFRICA AND THE WORLD: HOW HAS COVID-19 PANDEMIC BROUGHT US CLOSER?

“For better or for worse” we are all connected on this planet. Who would have anticipated that my One Health Keynote Address to colleagues on March 11, 2020, would synchronize with WHO pronouncing Covid-19 a global virus pandemic? “In the midst of change we often discover wings we never knew we had.” These unexpected events opened doors for us all, laying a path I did not anticipate as a US Fulbright Specialist in Malaysia. This has led to and continues to build global collaborations and interdisciplinary One Health teams.

Three years of events with the generous support of the US Fulbright Specialist Program has led to this *Fulbright Chronicles* article. The Covid-19 pandemic occurring at the same time as my US Fulbright Specialist in Malaysia was by no measure uncanny. Our planet Earth connects all of us globally.

For better or for worse we are all connected on this planet. Who would have anticipated that my One Health Keynote Address to colleagues on March 11, 2020, would synchronize with WHO pronouncing Covid-19 a global virus pandemic?

NOTES

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Tropical Medicine specialists from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, Nigeria, and the US participated in the 56th Annual Scientific Conference MSPTM, Malaysia, entitled “Neglected, Tropical and Vector Borne Diseases: The Evolution of One Health from Challenges to Solutions” (Photo credit: MSPTM)

BIOGRAPHY

Rosina C. Krecek, PhD MBA, has held multiple high-level positions combining One Health and veterinary parasitology, including Associate Dean for Research at Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine, West Indies; Professor of Global One Health and Interim Dean of One Health, Texas A&M University, US; and Professor of Parasitology, South Africa. She wishes to thank the US Fulbright Specialist program for their support. Rosina can be reached at rkrecek@icloud.com and <https://www.krecekandkrecek.com>

FULBRIGHT (RE-)CONNECTIONS: CENTERING COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

MOLLY HAMM-RODRÍGUEZ AND MEGAN JEANETTE MYERS



ABSTRACT

The authors represent a Fulbright US Scholar and a recipient of the Fulbright Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (DDRA) award. We initially met at a community event on the Dominican-Haitian border in 2012 and, a decade later, reconnected during our Fulbrights in the Dominican Republic. Our efforts to center community partners throughout our projects led to unique reflections about understanding the organization of community-based research, valuing student perspectives, and determining how to best leverage previous in-country experiences.

Keywords: Dominican Republic • community-based research • high-impact practices • Fulbright US Scholar • Fulbright Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad



INTRODUCTION: INTERSECTIONS OF A FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR AND FULBRIGHT DDRA RECIPIENT IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Fulbright not only offers opportunities for students and scholars to make new connections with international colleagues and community members, but also serves as a mechanism to bring together US-based interdisciplinary researchers. We represent two recent Fulbright Fellows, a Fulbright US Scholar and a Fulbright DDRA award recipient, who worked in the same community of Cabarete, Dominican Republic. Despite our varied backgrounds in-country and differences in our formal academic training, our research and Fulbright experience led to similar conclusions and reflections about our respective projects. Methodological practices that place communities at the forefront, namely community-based research and engaged scholarship, served to guide our work. The present article traces our understanding of the role of community partners in Fulbright research, extending beyond the traditional model of a college or university serving as the primary point of contact and support for Fulbrighters. In particular, we focus on the role that local students—both at the high school *and* university levels—can fulfill as unofficial community partners. We explore frameworks of community-driven research and engaged scholarship and reflect on what these pedagogical models looked like for us in the Dominican context. We also reflect on our own trajectories in-country and consider how decades of previous work prepared

us for our Fulbright experiences. Finally, we center our personal experiences by considering what being a Fulbright Scholar or Fulbright DDRA recipient offers an individual beyond research output: community, friendships, and collaborations.

COLLABORATION AS KEY: CENTERING COMMUNITY

Both of our projects—detailed in the following paragraphs—share common threads in striving to center community needs and voices. Albeit with different research motivations and end-goals, we both worked with the same non-profit ([The DREAM Project](#)) to position community partnerships as essential to our work and research. Community-based research (CBR) is a methodological practice that stresses collaborative partnerships between scholars and the communities in which the research takes place. CBR underscores the importance of not just producing research for a specific community or disseminating research in a specific community, but instead working with and alongside community partners to define research questions and design research projects. CBR also endeavors to amplify community needs and make space for communities to tell their own stories. CBR in many ways parallels community-based learning (CBL) in that it emphasizes the need for meaningful community engagement. CBL, however, is a teaching and learning strategy as opposed to a methodological research practice. As a pedagogical approach, CBL encourages instructors to connect course content to advances in community-based and social knowledge. Keystones of both CBR and CBL include responding to community-identified needs and building mutually beneficial partnerships and reciprocal relationships between university and community partners.

MOLLY’S FULBRIGHT PROJECT

I came to the Dominican Republic in 2021-2022 as a recipient of the Fulbright DDRA award. As an educator, I sought to investigate dominant discourses about youth language and literacy practices—including from the perspective of state, NGO, and other institutional actors—in relation to youth’s own perspectives on their practices. I spent four months conducting participant observations and co-teaching English classes within a youth workforce development program hosted in both Cabarete and Puerto Plata. After working with 80 students (18-24 years old) in these classes, I recruited 18 of them to participate in a series of workshops on language and social justice that culminated in youth developing their own action research projects on topics of interest. In addition to teaching and learning relationships with students, the most important aspect of cross-cultural knowledge building and exchange occurred by collaborating on the design and delivery of workshops with Dominican and Haitian activists and educators. This process ensured that the workshops were grounded in transnational learning as we addressed

the unique contexts of bilingualism and social issues of migration in the United States, Dominican Republic, and Haiti. These collaborative learning experiences have built the foundation for long-term engagement and impact, as we plan to continue developing projects together over the next few years.

MEGAN'S FULBRIGHT PROJECT

My Fulbright US Scholar Award in Research & Teaching built on my research related to Caribbean literature and my experiences teaching CBL courses at the university level. With regards to research and explicitly related to my teaching assignment in the Dominican Republic, I studied the impact of CBL courses for Dominican university students while teaching a literature course at the Technological University of Santiago (UTESA) in Puerto Plata. As part of the community-engaged course, my university students planned and facilitated workshops on literary analysis at DREAM. Each student group used active learning strategies to introduce groups of high school students to literary analysis in an engaging way that encouraged student involvement. The joint research and teaching award allowed me to bring community engagement into the classroom *and* to bring the classroom into the community. In this way, my Fulbright experience successfully merged my teacher-scholar profile and helped me to emphasize the degree to which my research informs and impacts my teaching and, likewise, my teaching informs and impacts my research. As a related output to my Fulbright research project, I have a forthcoming article in the *International Journal of Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement* (IJRSLCE). Further, as a direct connection to my teaching, I am planning to return to my host institution in the Dominican Republic in the future to offer a workshop on Active Learning for university instructors.

STUDENTS AS PARTNERS

Although both of our projects involved partnerships with institutions whose infrastructure, resources, and collaboration generously supported our work, our focal partners were the students themselves. Because community-based research and community-based learning is focused on larger social issues that extend beyond the walls of institutions, partnerships must center student needs even when those might contradict other program and policy priorities. CBR and CBL allow for students and community partners to have agency over the topics, pedagogical strategies, and projects that are of interest to them. This approach may look different across projects. For example, it is not necessary for students to have 100% control over all decisions for a project to be participatory. Most participatory projects in educational spaces include structured learning opportunities alongside student-led action. In addition, the final products or outcomes valued in partnerships are not

always the same for all participants. Students may not have any interest in co-authoring a research article despite such work being a high priority for academics. The heart of participatory work is active listening, negotiating decisions, and decentering the researcher's agenda.

In Molly's project, initial entrance interviews with youth participants supported workshop development as ideas that were frequently expressed in the interviews were incorporated in learning activities. Although Molly had planned for students to do participatory action research projects on language-related topics, she followed their lead and gave students' options to choose social issues instead. In the end, all students decided to choose a social justice topic, such as food insecurity and mental health, for their final projects. For Megan, many of her students were in-service teachers. Given their experiences in secondary education, Megan was able to scaffold in-class activities during the class meeting times; one of the most dynamic activities was a human timeline in which the students had to re-order the plot of a short story (each with a sentence or two that they had to put in chronological order by forming a line at the front of the classroom). Megan also encouraged the university students to develop activities for the literary workshop that actively engaged the workshop attendees in the learning process; the university students used the active learning strategies modeled in class as inspiration. In short, our collaborations with students changed the trajectories of our respective projects.

MOLLY'S PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRAJECTORY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

I first traveled to the Dominican Republic in March 2011 as a Master's student in Dr. Lesley Bartlett's course on Curriculum and Instruction in International Contexts at Teachers College, Columbia University. The course paired students with institutions that had a specific curricular, professional development, or policy need, and teams of graduate students were assigned to support their work. My team was paired with The DREAM Project, a relationship that Dr. Bartlett had established as a Fulbright Scholar (2008) and Fulbright-Hayes Faculty Fellow (2009) in the Dominican Republic. I returned to work as a volunteer coordinator for DREAM's summer camp in summer 2011, and was hired full time as a Monitoring, Research, and Evaluation Coordinator when I graduated in May 2012. Over a five-year period, I was promoted to Associate Director. In this role, I had the opportunity to work with numerous Fulbright fellows who visited and/or worked with DREAM during their fellowship years, an experience that sparked my interest in applying for a fellowship in the future. From 2012-2017, I led and coordinated several initiatives for youth and teachers, including large subgrants from USID and the US Embassy. I have spent time in countless schools, classrooms, and homes in the Dominican Republic, and have always approached my work through participatory and community-based methods that center the voices of staff members, public

school teachers, students, and families. My dissertation research is grounded in my experiences listening to the deficit ways that students and teachers are often framed in the country as well as hearing students and teachers recount their frustrations with how their aspirations and desires are often thwarted by systemic inequities. I was also personally frustrated by the ways that education projects in the country frequently contribute more to social reproduction than to social transformation. Coursework, research, and teaching experiences in my doctoral program provided necessary theory and models for returning to the country and designing a research program that could support students (and myself as researcher) in developing critical consciousness and cross-cultural solidarities.

MEGAN'S PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRAJECTORY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

My first long-term visit to the Dominican Republic took place in 2009 when I volunteered at a literacy center on the organic coffee farm (Finca Alta Gracia) previously owned by Julia Alvarez and her husband, Bill Eichner. I then returned in 2010 and 2011 to run summer literacy programs at the same farm. Since 2012, I have traveled nine times to the northern border towns of Dajabón (Dominican Republic) and Ouanaminthe (Haiti) for Border of Lights (BOL). BOL is a volunteer collective that I helped to found and of which I currently serve as a lead organizer. In broad terms, BOL seeks to commemorate the lives of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent that were lost as a result of the 1937 Massacre. Additionally, it celebrates the solidarity and camaraderie that exists along the Dominican-Haitian border. On various occasions, I have taught summer classes at the Mariposa Foundation, an educational non-profit for girls based in Cabarete, and I have also led study abroad programs. While my experiences in-country are diverse and span several geographical regions, education serves as a common thread; such experiences working with Dominican youth—both in formal and informal educational settings—fostered my interest in pursuing teaching in the country at the university level as a Fulbright Scholar. In addition to a background in education in the Dominican Republic spanning nearly 15 years, I also define as a Caribbeanist and Dominicanist and I primarily publish research on Dominican and Dominican American literature. My first research monograph, *Mapping Hispaniola: Third Space in Dominican and Haitian Literature* (2019), looks at interpretations of third space(s) in Dominican and Haitian literature and my current project explores the intersections, both literary and otherwise, between Dominican American Julia Alvarez and Haitian American Edwidge Danticat.

(RE)-CONNECTING AS FULBRIGHTERS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

With a combined 25+ years of personal and professional experiences in the Dominican Republic prior to our recent Fulbrights, we shared similar motivations for returning to the country where we already had invested so much of our time. While some Fulbrighters hope to make new connections when they apply to conduct research and teaching projects around the world, we instead endeavored to strengthen existing connections and collaborations. At the same time, we embarked on new projects, engaging with students with whom we had not worked previously. When we (re)connected through the expansive network of past, current, and future Fulbrighters in the Dominican Republic, we quickly realized that we were in the same town and had similar contacts. As the Spanish saying goes, *el mundo es un pañuelo* (like the saying in English, “the world is small”)—and it feels even smaller when you have both been visiting the same area(s) of the country for years. We realized after looking through old photos that we had met in 2012 at the Dominican-Haitian border during Border of Lights events. We also both received FLAS grants (Foreign Language and Area Studies award) as graduate students to learn Haitian Kreyòl at Florida International University.

Speaking Kreyòl differentiates us from some other scholars working in the country and this language skill, in addition to a near-native level of Spanish, allows us to connect with both Haitian, Dominican, and Dominican of Haitian descent community members and students. From a personal perspective, we both traveled to the Dominican Republic on our Fulbrights with our families, including young children. While in Cabarete, our children played together and they were even enrolled in the same local swim class. The way Fulbright welcomes and encourages scholars and students with families makes the program unique and was a major factor in our interest in the fellowships. Traveling with our families, without a doubt, also connected us to the communities where we worked and lived in profound ways. Our own cross-cultural understanding was positively impacted by witnessing our families’ connections to local language and cultural practices, allowing us to better comprehend what living in a country other than the US teaches children and youth about diversity.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Community serves as the foundation of our collaborative reflections on our experiences as a Fulbright US Scholar and a recipient of the Fulbright DDRA award. Not only did our Fulbrights in the Dominican Republic give us the professional opportunities to conduct community-based research projects and model community-

Not only did our Fulbrights in the Dominican Republic give us the professional opportunities to conduct community-based research projects and model community-based learning in-country, but we also had important takeaways about the roles of our students as integral parts of our Fulbright communities.

based learning in-country, but we also had important takeaways about the roles of our students as integral parts of our Fulbright communities. Both of our projects aimed to center our students' agency and to engage them as active and valued community members; our Fulbright projects contributed to our own knowledge in the fields of CBR and CBL as they forced us to be flexible, work through challenges, and to adjust our understandings of collaboration in cross-cultural contexts. Finally, in relation to community in a broad sense, we extended our own in-country networks during our Fulbrights, fully recognizing the importance of personal and professional community-building.

NOTES

1. For more information on Border of Lights, see the open access *Border of Lights Reader*, <https://www.fulcrum.org/concern/monographs/1v53k057r> or www.borderoflights.org.
2. For further reading on interdisciplinary studies on Haiti and the Dominican Republic, see *Transnational Hispaniola* (University of Florida Press, 2018), edited by April J. Mayes and Kiran C. Jayaram.
3. To learn more about participatory research, navigate to this online resource on leading Youth Participatory Action Research projects, <https://yparhub.berkeley.edu/>.



Left: Myers with UTESA students before leading literary workshops in Cabarete.

Right: Hamm-Rodríguez co-presenting with two students at the Dominican Republic TESOL conference in Santo Domingo.

BIOGRAPHY

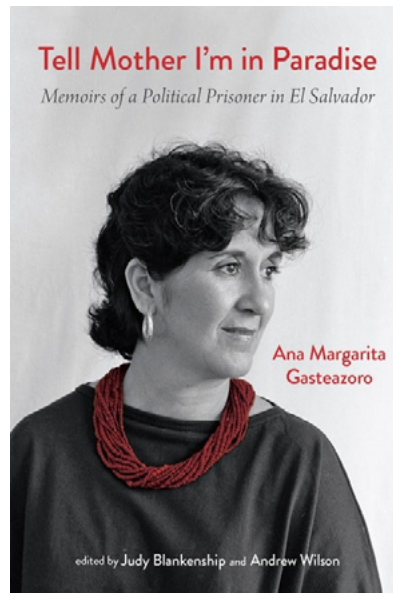
Megan Jeanette Myers is an Associate Professor of Spanish at Iowa State University. She is the author of *Mapping Hispaniola: Mapping Third Space in Dominican and Haitian Literature* (2019) and the co-editor of *The Border of Lights Reader: Bearing Witness to Genocide in the Dominican Republic* (2021). Myers is a Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) Faculty Fellow at Iowa State University and a past Iowa Campus Compact Engaged Scholar Fellow. She publishes regularly on Caribbean and Latino/a/x literatures and in the fields of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP). She can be reached at mjmyers@iastate.edu, Puerto Plata and Cabarete, Dominican Republic, Fulbright US Scholar, January 2022-June 2022.

Molly Hamm-Rodríguez is a PhD candidate in Equity, Bilingualism, and Bilitery in the School of Education at the University of Colorado Boulder. She has published two book chapters on the education system in the Dominican Republic, with additional research on language and literacy practices in the country and diaspora published in *Applied Linguistics and archipelagos: a journal of Caribbean digital praxis*. She was a Community-Based Research Fellow at CU Boulder's CU Engage and has been involved in community-based learning initiatives for more than 15 years. Molly is an active member of the American Anthropological Association and Caribbean Studies Association. She can be reached at molly.hamm@colorado.edu, Puerto Plata and Cabarete, Dominican Republic, Fulbright Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad program, September 2021-August 2022.

REVIEWS

WOMAN WARRIOR

LOGAN PUCK



Ana Margarita Gasteazoro, *Tell Mother I'm in Paradise: Memoirs of a Political Prisoner in El Salvador*, edited by Judy Blankenship and Andrew Wilson. Judy Blankenship was a Fulbright Scholar to Ecuador in 2000, 2005, and 2013-14.

Tell Mother I'm in Paradise: Memoirs of a Political Prisoner in El Salvador is an exciting read that provides a unique perspective on Salvadoran politics and society before and during the Civil War. It is an excellent book for those interested in Salvadoran history, revolutionary struggle, and gender and class politics.

In 1986, Judy Blankenship and Andrew Wilson, two NGO workers, met Ana Margarita Gasteazoro and became fascinated by her life story. From that moment on, until Gasteazoro's death from cancer in January of 1993, Blankenship and Wilson visited her a number of times to record her story. Although they completed the first manuscript in the 1990s, Gasteazoro's family did not approve publication of the book until decades later. The delay provides the reader with the feeling of listening to a voice unearthed from the past. Blankenship and Wilson have masterfully edited the recordings into a riveting portrait of a determined woman who turned against her privileged, conservative upbringing to struggle against injustice.

A riveting portrait of a determined woman who turned against her privileged, conservative upbringing to struggle against injustice.

Gasteazoro begins her narrative by describing her wealthy Catholic upbringing in San Salvador where she lived with her parents, four siblings, and a plethora of servants. As a teenager, Gasteazoro's rebellious spirit created constant tension between her and her parents, especially her mother. This theme runs throughout the book. Fed up with her antics, Gasteazoro's parents eventually sent her to a religious, all-girls school in Guatemala where she befriended a nun and a young social worker who exposed her to the widespread poverty in Guatemala City. This is the moment we see the first seeds of Gasteazoro's revolutionary consciousness emerge, though it would take another decade before she made good on the lessons she encountered in Guatemala City's slums.

Part Two of the book focuses on Gasteazoro's transition to political activism. The Salvadoran military's constant meddling in politics and increasing use of terror and brutality led Gasteazoro to become an active member of the social democratic National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) where her education, knowledge of foreign languages, and worldliness served as a major asset for the cause. As her resolve against the regime hardened, she eventually became a secret operative supporting the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the guerrilla organization waging war against the Salvadoran government.

Curiously, Gasteazoro rarely dwells on major events in Salvadoran history. For example, she only devotes a few paragraphs to the murder of Archbishop Óscar Romero and provides little reflection on her experiences being fired on by government troops at Romero's funeral procession. Gasteazoro does, however, go into great detail describing her time at party meetings and international leftist conferences and offers colorful accounts of the activists and revolutionaries she meets at these events.

Gasteazoro's narrative also reveals the challenges of the moment, for instance, the near-constant sexism within Salvadoran society and the leftist movement itself. Gasteazoro grapples with unwanted sexual advances and dismissive attitudes from fellow male activists. As Gasteazoro states, "Men don't like women being more intelligent than they are" (121). She also contends with disdain for her upper-class roots, as some militants derisively called her bourgeois and questioned her commitment to the cause.

The final and most fascinating section of the book focuses on Gasteazoro's imprisonment. Gasteazoro's revolutionary activities led to her arrest and detention in a National Guard torture facility, which she describes in chilling detail. After ten days of beatings, sleep deprivation, and interrogations, she was transferred to a women's prison where she immediately joined the Political Prisoners' Committee of El Salvador (COPPES). No longer subjected to the male gaze, Gasteazoro flourished as she advocated for prisoners' rights, organized her fellow inmates, and strove to create a strong community based on solidarity. "It was all very exciting for me," she explains. "I had spent hours in the *Guardia Nacional* thinking about what I would do when I got to

prison, and now I had these experienced, practical *compañeras* to work with. I felt wonderful: I had been there only two hours but I could see clearly the work ahead. I felt we were capable of organizing the whole damn prison” (155-156).

Gasteazoro brings the prison to life through vignettes about the women she encountered. The stories give these women a sense of humanity and highlight the complicated nature of relationships behind bars. They also shed light on how the challenges faced in the prison reflected the same problems facing the Salvadoran left at large and its efforts to overthrow the state. Instead of uniting, Gasteazoro explains how the political prisoners factionalized into the political parties and revolutionary movements that echoed their affiliations in the outside world. These groups competed with each other in their attempts to control the COPPES agenda and recruit new inmates to their side. She colorfully describes this intense competition for new recruits: “whenever a woman arrived in the section, each organization would try to pull her into their orbit. Sometimes the competition was about benefits: a better bed, or a more comfortable mattress, or nicer sandals. At times it became a scramble to get there first and to trip up the competition on the way. The new woman would be overwhelmed by all the attention” (188).

Tell Mother I’m in Paradise is an illuminating work that deserves to be placed alongside other classic memoirs by women, such as Rigoberta Menchú and Elvía Alvarado, who fought for social justice in deeply unequal and violent settings. It is a particularly good complement to *The Country Under My Skin* written by the Nicaraguan poet and novelist, Gioconda Belli. Belli’s memoir is a similar personal account of a Central American woman wrestling with her upper-class background as she engages in a revolutionary struggle in a heavily patriarchal setting. The poetic, dramatic flair of Belli’s work is nicely balanced by Gasteazoro’s more grounded narrative. It almost feels as if you are sitting in the room with Gasteazoro as she tells the story of her life.

Ana Margarita Gasteazoro *Tell Mother I’m in Paradise: Memoirs of a Political Prisoner in El Salvador*. Judy Blankenship and Andrew Wilson, eds. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2022. 250 pages, \$34.95.

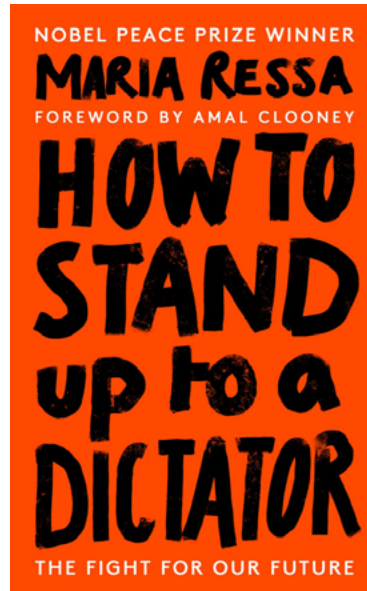
BIOGRAPHY

Logan Puck is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science at George Washington University. His research focuses on crime, violence, and security in Latin America with an emphasis on plural policing in Mexico. He earned an M.A. in Latin American Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and a PhD in Politics from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He was a Fulbright-García Robles Scholar at the *Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas* (CIDE) in Mexico City from 2013 to 2014. His email is logan.hj.puck@gmail.com



GOVERNMENTS AND JOURNALISM BATTLE IN AN ONLINE WORLD

DOM CARISTI



How to Stand up to a Dictator by Maria Ressa, a US student Fulbrighter to the University of the Philippines in 1986.

Maria Ressa is the latest in a long line of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates to publish a book providing advice to the world. Ressa's book is part memoir and part call-to-action as she tells the story of her life, how she came to be involved in Philippine media, and her long, tedious, and expensive battle fighting multiple lawsuits brought against her by the Philippine government in an effort to silence her. In January she was acquitted on four counts of tax evasion but as of this writing is still fighting other suits, including a cyber libel conviction.

Ressa is not the first to be critical of social media platforms, but she provides extensive evidence to support her assertion that “the very platforms that deliver the news we need are biased against facts” (4). Democracy is threatened, especially in emerging countries, but as we have seen, the problems they experience soon become the problems of established democracies. Her harshest criticisms are aimed at Facebook. Over the years she met with multiple officials—including Mark Zuckerberg—and provided them with facts and figures describing the damage they were causing, but her pleas went unanswered. Facebook's most frequent response was to do nothing. When they did act, their actions were often counterproductive.

The book is divided into three parts, the first of which covers her first forty years. Born in the Philippines, her mother brought her to the US at age ten. She learned very early the lessons that would carry her through the difficult years ahead: make the choice to learn, embrace fear, and stand up to bullies. This section includes her Fulbright year when she returned to the Philippines and found her calling in journalism. She tells of her years working as a journalist for state-owned media, the news division of a Philippine entertainment conglomerate, and even CNN. In those years she developed her sense of duty to the truth. While some journalists seek balance in their reporting, Ressa considers truth more important. She says good journalists “would not give equal time and space to known climate deniers and climate change scientists” (72).

The second part of the book focuses more on technology: the impact of the internet and Ressa’s founding of *Rappler*, a Philippine online, news-gathering company that relies heavily on audience engagement. The goal from the beginning was to encourage “participatory journalism” using crowdsourced content. She had been encouraged by the activism she saw that resulted in real challenges to dictators (such as the Arab Spring). It wasn’t long before she found that the same technological advances could be turned against people just as easily, “fueling the rise of digital authoritarians, the death of facts, and the insidious mass manipulation we live with today” (105). It didn’t help that Facebook’s algorithms distributed false information faster and more broadly than the truth. “Facebook represents one of the gravest threats to democracies around the world,” she wrote, “and I am amazed that we have allowed our freedoms to be taken away by technology companies’ greed for growth and revenues” (137). Spreading anger and hate is more profitable and fuels the “us versus them” mindset.

The final section of the book focuses on the attacks that both Ressa and *Rappler* have endured over the past fifteen years and includes a call to action. In perhaps the greatest irony of all, she notes, “Free speech is being used to stifle free speech” (185). Intimidation, character assassinations and even threats are used to silence dissenters. Thanks to social media, threats get amplified and repeated far beyond the original post.

Throughout the book, Ressa emphasizes two important defenses against the deception, hate, and fascism from the powerful: journalism and civic engagement. Journalism has been attacked and we can see the effects. Media are characterized as enemies and liars which despots use to their advantage. If people lose trust in the media, their reporting on the lies, illegal actions and even murders by the people in power will be ignored. At the same time news media have lost money to social media, providing them with fewer resources to fight back. A weakened mass media plays into the hands of oppressors.

Ressa calls on everyone to become involved. It’s not just a fight for the future of news; it’s a battle for democracy.

The second defense is civic engagement, and Ressa calls on everyone to become involved. It's not just a fight for the future of news; it's a battle for democracy. She wants us to demand accountability from technology; protect and grow investigative journalism; and build larger communities of action.

A lot has changed in just a few decades. The internet has made new communication channels possible that can have tremendous impact. *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* is a powerful book that reminds us of the dangers of allowing the power of government officials and the new power of social media platforms to operate unchecked.

Maria Ressa, *How to Stand Up to a Dictator*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. 2022. 301 pages \$29.99.

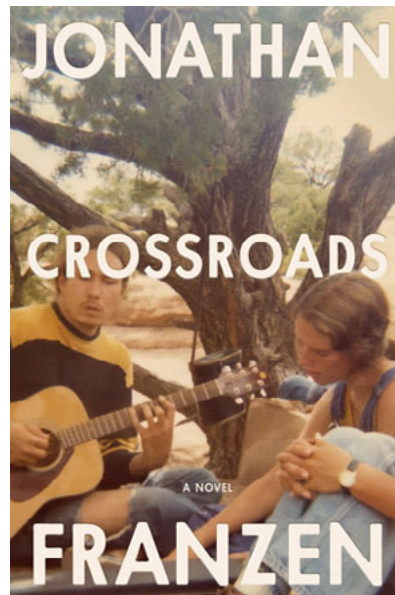
BIOGRAPHY

Dom Caristi is Professor Emeritus of Media at Ball State University. He was a Fulbright Scholar to Slovenia in 1995 and Greece in 2009. He served as the Fulbright Program Adviser at Ball State and for six years was a Fulbright Alumni Ambassador, visiting 40 campuses to encourage other faculty to apply for a Fulbright. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Indiana Chapter of the Fulbright Association. He is co-author of the textbook, *Communication Law: Practical Applications in the Digital Age*, now in its third edition. His email is dgcristi@bsu.edu



THE REWARD WAS CLARITY

MARK TARDI



Crossroads by Jonathan Franzen, Fulbright Scholar to Germany in 1981.

At this stage in his illustrious career, which now includes six bestselling novels and numerous collections of nonfiction, Jonathan Franzen can do pretty much whatever he feels like. Resting on his laurels, however, is clearly not on his itinerary. *Crossroads*, his ambitious sixth novel (and the opening salvo in a planned trilogy), is set in a fictional early 1970s suburb of Chicago called New Prospect, and there we meet the Hildebrandt family, all of whom are on the cusp of something.

There's Russ, an associate pastor at a comfortable suburban church in the midst of a midlife crisis; Marion, Russ's supportive wife—"a mother of four with a twenty-year-old's heart" (270); and the children: Clem, Becky, Perry, and Judson. Clem is the oldest and the unabashed atheist in his family—"Science and delusion had no common ground" (574)—initially a student at the University of Illinois until withdrawing to accept his Vietnam draft number in pursuit of social justice. Becky is the beautiful, popular girl at school à la any number of John Hughes's films, plotting her future, and her younger brother Perry is the hyper-intelligent outsider with a penchant for recreational drug use, transactional friendships, and the flexible logic of a natural schemer. Judson, the youngest of the family and in primary school, appears to be a sweet little boy (but we only catch glimpses of him through others). The Hildebrandt teenagers, however, burn with their own youthful self-certainty and solipsism: the certainty in the righteousness of their convictions and intelligence (though in differing ways), and the often rigid certainty in their assessment of their parents' failings.

The title, *Crossroads*, serves as both thematic and emotional compass for the novel: the eponymous youth group at First Reformed Church, an organization that figures prominently in the lives of the three oldest Hildebrandt children and the catalyst for what Russ refers to as his “humiliation.” Humiliation for Russ, however, is complex and spiritually clarifying: “The sense of rightness at the bottom of his worst days, the feeling of homecoming in his humiliations, was how he knew God existed” (12). The action that unfolds in the novel explores various socio-historical crossroads in American history: 1960s counterculture giving way to the “ME” Decade; the looming failure of the Vietnam War; the growing recognition of pluralistic and multiple “Americas”; the crossroads between the vibrancy and hope of youth and the pains of maturity; the intersections of various forms of spirituality, and the costs of economic, racial, and social progress in different communities; and, finally, the unintended intersections of mistakes that braid a family together. As all of the Hildebrandts will learn (sometimes despite their best efforts), none of their decisions or desires exists in a vacuum.

Franzen is perhaps at his best when he’s offering unvarnished portraits of his characters’ deeply human motivations, yet some of the novel’s most gracious insights come from his consideration of faith: for Russ, “Prayer was an inflection of the soul in God’s direction” (325–26); for Becky, in a marijuana-induced epiphany, “Time can’t be measured without light” (266). At the same time, the Hildebrandts are like fractals and the closer they’re examined, the more the details proliferate—often heartbreakingly so (in the interest of avoiding spoilers, Marion’s early life in California or where Perry’s effort to be a better person take him are but two examples.)

Readers of earlier books such as *Freedom* or *The Corrections* will recognize Franzen’s fluency with the American Midwest, and there are numerous passages skillfully describing Illinois environs; as a native Chicagoan, a description such as “the ground-level haze that industrial agriculture seemed to generate in winter, a smog part dampness and part nitrates” (94) certainly left me nodding in silent agreement. What’s more, although much of the action unfolds just before Christmas 1971, like Nathaniel Hawthorne or Mark Twain, Franzen leverages an historical period to zoom in and out of the lives of his characters in order to make poignant observations about our contemporary moment. Put simply, there’s a timely quality to the novel as it connects current hot-button issues—such as the potentially cringe-worthy behaviors or beliefs of earlier generations, the pitfalls of groupthink and cancel culture, questions of (in)authenticity or cultural appropriation, and the spiritual void—to suggest these dynamics very much predate the present and have, in fact, long been a part of the American experiment. For example, despite decades of genuine social activism and community involvement, devoting time and resources to marginalized and oppressed groups, in a moment of introspection, Russ recognizes that to those in the Crossroads youth group, he appears to be little

more than “the fantasy of a dork freeloading on another man’s charisma” (229)—in this case, the more charismatic Rick Ambrose, the younger, assistant pastor and Russ’s nemesis. Becky’s observation that “almost everything in life was vanity” (548) could easily be filtered through Instagram.

With elements of the picaresque—much of the action takes place in the fictional Chicago, but extended flashbacks and the propulsive plot take us to California, Arizona, New Orleans, Europe and even Peru—*Crossroads* is never static; it’s a gripping portrait of an American family at the tenuous intersection of aspiration and disintegration, and I’m excited to see what roads the next two volumes in Franzen’s project will take.

Crossroads is a gripping portrait of an American family at the tenuous intersection of aspiration and disintegration.

Jonathan Franzen, *Crossroads*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. 2021. 592 pages. \$30.

BIOGRAPHY

Mark Tardi, a Fulbright Scholar to Poland in 2008-09, is a recipient of a 2022 NEA Fellowship in Literary Translation, a 2023 PEN/Heim Translation Grant, and the author of three books, most recently, *The Circus of Trust* (Dalkey Archive, 2017). Recent work and translations can be found in *The Experiment Will Not Be Bound* (Unbound Edition, 2022), *Full Stop*, LIT, *Interim*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Millions*, *Circumference*, and elsewhere. His translations of *The Squatters’ Gift* by Robert Rybicki (Dalkey Archive) and *Faith in Strangers* by Katarzyna Szaulińska (Toad Press/Veliz Books) were published in 2021. He is on the faculty at the University of Łódź. His email is mark.tardi@gmail.com



THE ILLUMINATING BEACON

HABIBA I. ATTA

Social Issues, Justice and Status

Five Scarves

Doing the Impossible

If We Can Reverse Cell Fate,
Why Can't We Redefine Success?



Rana Dajani, Ph.D.

NOVA

Five Scarves by Rana Dajani, winner of a Fulbright Foreign Student Scholarship in 2000 at the University of Iowa and a Scholar Research Award at Yale University in 2012.

Five Scarves offers amazing insights into the life of a highly successful academic, an associate professor of biology and biotechnology at the Hashemite University in Jordan, a Fellow at the Harvard Radcliffe Institute, and the recipient of numerous prestigious awards. Her book reveals the challenges she faced and the ultimate rewards she received, and she discusses these facets of her life using five “Outlooks” which are represented by the five scarves of the title: teaching pedagogy; research; gender issues; religion and culture; and writing skills.

This approach provides a broad perspective and shows the multiple layers which may not be apparent but are very vital in defining a Muslim, Arab female in the world of research. Dajani, a Palestinian-Syrian-Jordanian molecular biologist, had the privilege of conducting research in a developing country (Jordan) and a developed country (the United States), which defined her journey, made her stand out amidst the challenges, and allowed her to attain an elevated status in the global scientific community.

Dajani's approach shows the multiple layers which may not be apparent but are vital in defining a Muslim, Arab female in the world of research.

The author's strong sense of family values did not derail her from achieving great heights in her career, and we can see the lasting effect that principles set in early childhood had on defining her life as a dedicated wife, mother (of four children), and scientist. She involved her entire family in her work and research, thus allowing them to appreciate and understand her work. Her family values enabled her to balance her work and family effectively. She never let her family feel her absence from home despite her dedication to her research and work (both as a graduate student and a faculty member). Time management is another value which the author used effectively, thus granting her a well-balanced work, family, and social life.

One beautiful aspect of the author's life which kept recurring throughout her journey in life is her love of reading. She firmly believes that "[R]eading is essential to the formation of a child's personality and imagination" (61). This directly or indirectly affected her major life choices and played a critical role in transforming a hobby into what effectively became a movement. She is the founder and director of the NGO *We Love Reading* which strengthened communities in her country and across the globe and was adapted in over thirty countries. The project greatly increased literacy rates not just among children but also among adults.

Pedagogy, as applied to the natural sciences, was demonstrated to be flexible and dynamic. Her constant quest to be a better educator and scientist led her to apply tactics that strengthened the self-confidence and the necessary curiosity of her students. She achieved this by encouraging them to become independent thinkers and to apply their own rational approach in providing solutions to scientific problems. She unequivocally showed that it was very pertinent for educators to always challenge their methods in order to become better versions of themselves, and ultimately this was transferred to her students.

Dr. Dajani's style of mentorship elicits a sense of social responsibility and strong self-confidence in her students, leading them to make better career choices. A good example of this is the Community Awareness Project, which involved her students in providing solutions to problems in the society.

The role of multi-disciplinary research in tackling issues that are potentially multi-dimensional was also highlighted. Dr. Dajani described how a collaborative research study she initiated led to the development of a DNA database which traced the lineage of Circassian and Chechen populations in Jordan and led to the discovery of a new genetic risk factor for diabetes and an eventual collaboration with two universities in the United States.

She also highlights misconceptions about gender representation in the academy, and how vital information about specific geographic regions is often misconstrued due to preconceived notions. Gender bias in academia is discussed in detail, especially in relation to recruitment and eventually, personal development initiatives. "Women are constantly reminded in contemporary

society that their worth and value lies primarily in the home,” she writes (94), encompassing the author’s perception about the lopsided opportunities in the workplace. In her view, the favoritism enjoyed by male applicants is a result of the dominant presence of males in hiring boards in academia.

The author also provides valuable insight on Islamic tenets and how they have favored and protected the rights of women over the centuries. Despite the occasional gender biases faced by the author in her career, she finds solace in her faith which seeks to correct such prejudice against females in general.

Five Scarves inspires creativity in academics and indeed other professionals in the execution of their duties, thus opening up additional avenues of expression. As a fellow academic, I have certainly been motivated by the approaches used by Dr. Dajani in educating and mentoring her students, which is evidence that we can push ourselves to be better in our craft and reap immense rewards.

Rana Dajani, *Five Scarves: Doing the Impossible - If We Can Reverse Cell Fate, Why Can't We Redefine Success?* Nova Science Pub. Inc.; 2018. 131 pages. \$78.

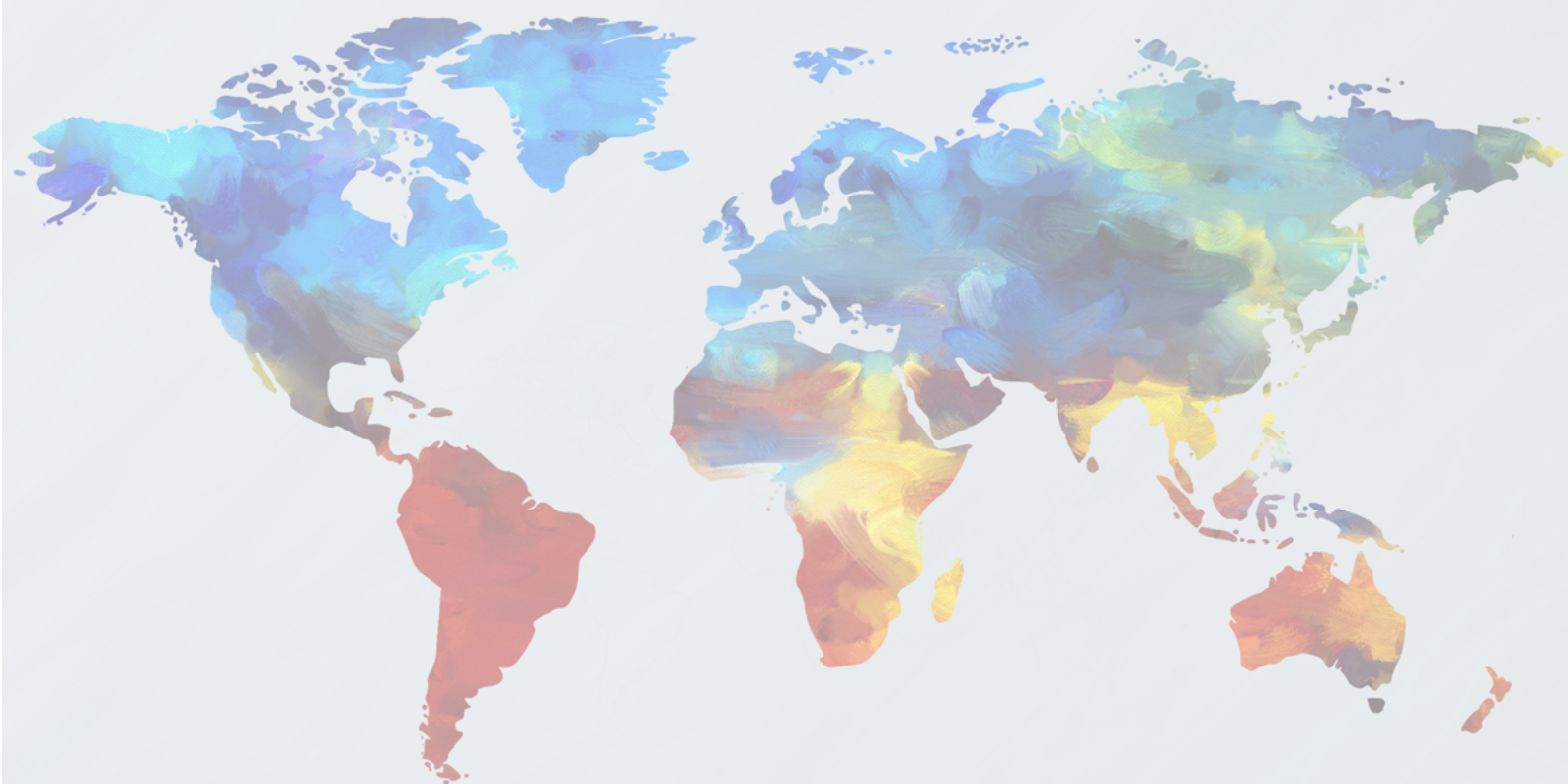
BIOGRAPHY

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