

THE MGRUBLIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY
AND RIGHTS. THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH REASON AND
CONSCIENCE AND SHOULD ACT TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER IN A
SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD

Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

A Letter from the Editors



Dear Readers,

My name is Ambika Gupta, and I am a first year student at CMC. As the semester ends, I am once again reminded of the importance of institutions like the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights.

I am so thankful to be a part of the Mgrublian Center, and I've been able to engage in many informative and reflective conversations because of it. As a co-host of the Watch Tower podcast, I was able to learn from our many insightful guests. Through the Amnesty International Task Force, I was able to work with a local non-profit and have constructive dialogues. Through the Mgrublian Center's programming, I've been able to broaden my worldview and am consistently inspired.

I am excited to continue to be challenged and grow in my future human rights endeavors. Thank you for reading our newsletter and supporting the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights!

Best wishes,
Ambika Gupta '27

Dear Readers,

As we reach the end of an eventful year, I hope this letter finds you well and filled with enthusiasm for the content we've curated for this special year-end edition of our newsletter.

Reflecting on the past year, it's been a time of growth, learning, and unwavering dedication to the causes we hold dear. As a sophomore majoring in Economics and Finance, my passion for journalism and multimedia has intertwined profoundly with my commitment to advancing human rights. Through this newsletter, we've sought to delve into complexities, spark meaningful conversations, and transcend traditional boundaries.

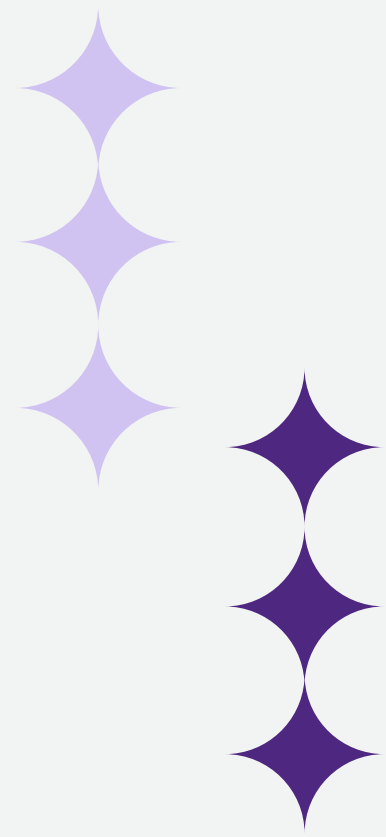
I invite you to explore the pages of this newsletter, to immerse yourself in the stories and perspectives shared within.

Thank you for being an integral part of this endeavor. Your support and engagement have been the driving force behind our mission to amplify the voices championing human rights causes.

Warm regards,
Maram Sharif '26



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TASK FORCE UPDATES

Student-led human rights task forces address current national and global human rights problems and are a great way for students to be involved with the Center on a volunteer-basis and to focus on a human rights topic or campaign of their choosing. Below is an update from some of the task force groups and events they sponsored during 2024.


HAVE ANY OLD HIGH SCHOOL BOOKS?

BOOK DRIVE

MARCH 18-20, 2024

Drop off any new or used school books:

- SAT, PSAT, AP, IB, etc Prep Books
- English, Math, Science, etc Books

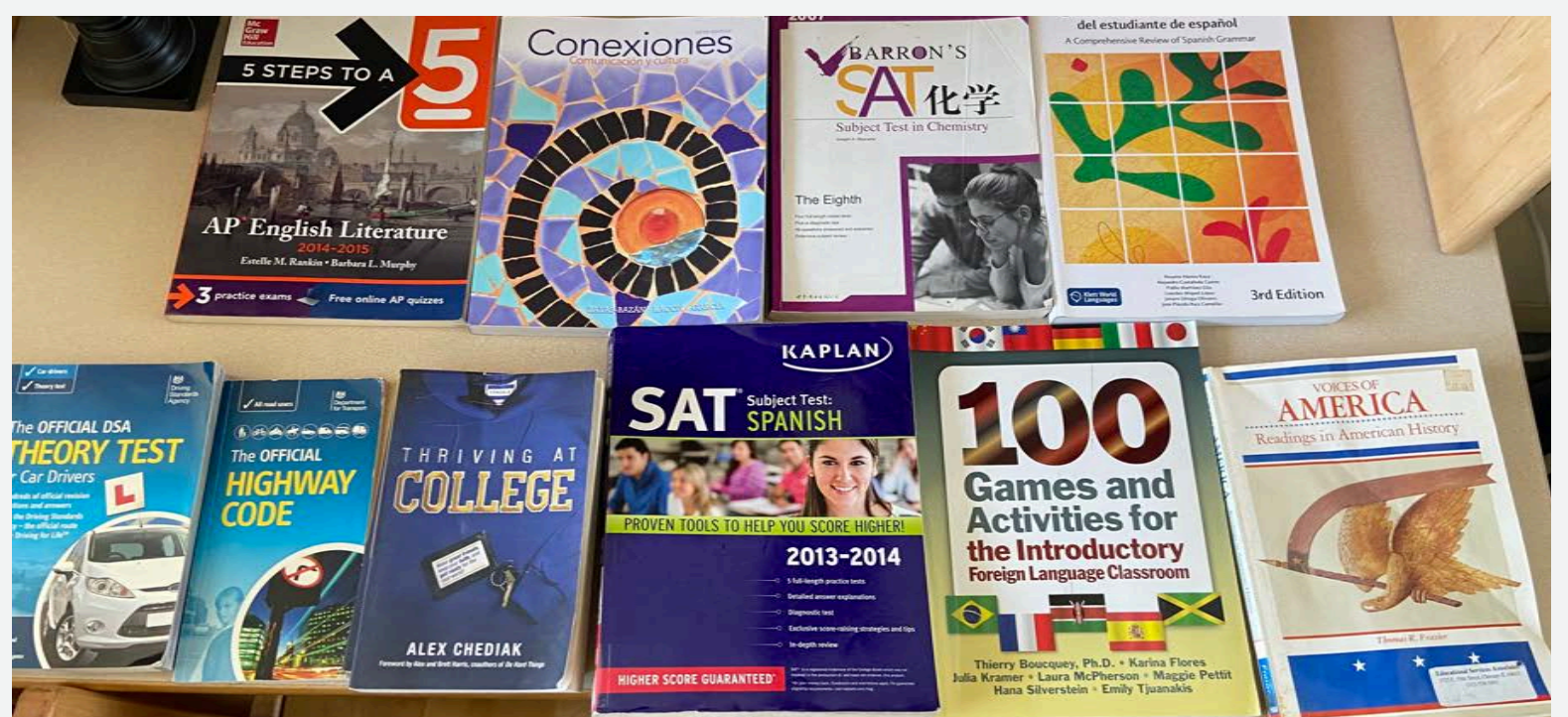


All books will go to local high school students in the Claremont and Pomona School Districts

Mgrublian Center for Human Rights
IDEA Task Force
Questions? Reach out to ayuan28@cmc.edu

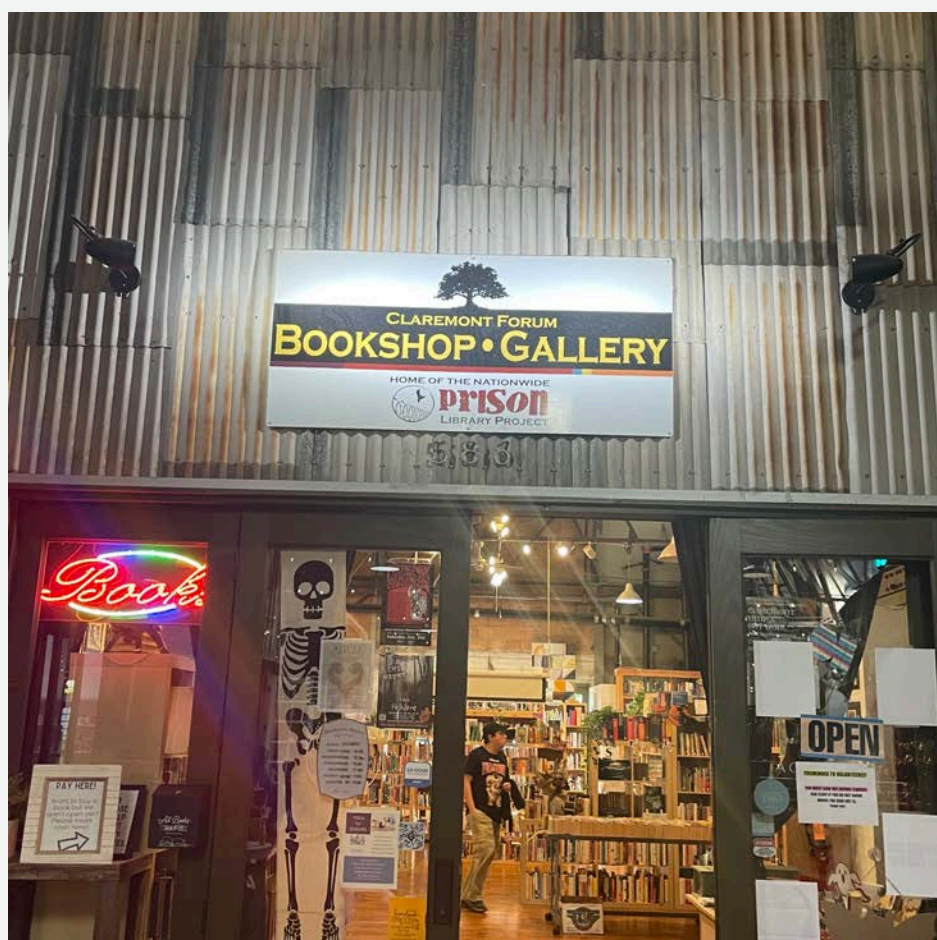
DROP BOX LOCATIONS
The Hub, Collins
Valach Hall, Stark Hall

International Development in Education Association (IDEA)

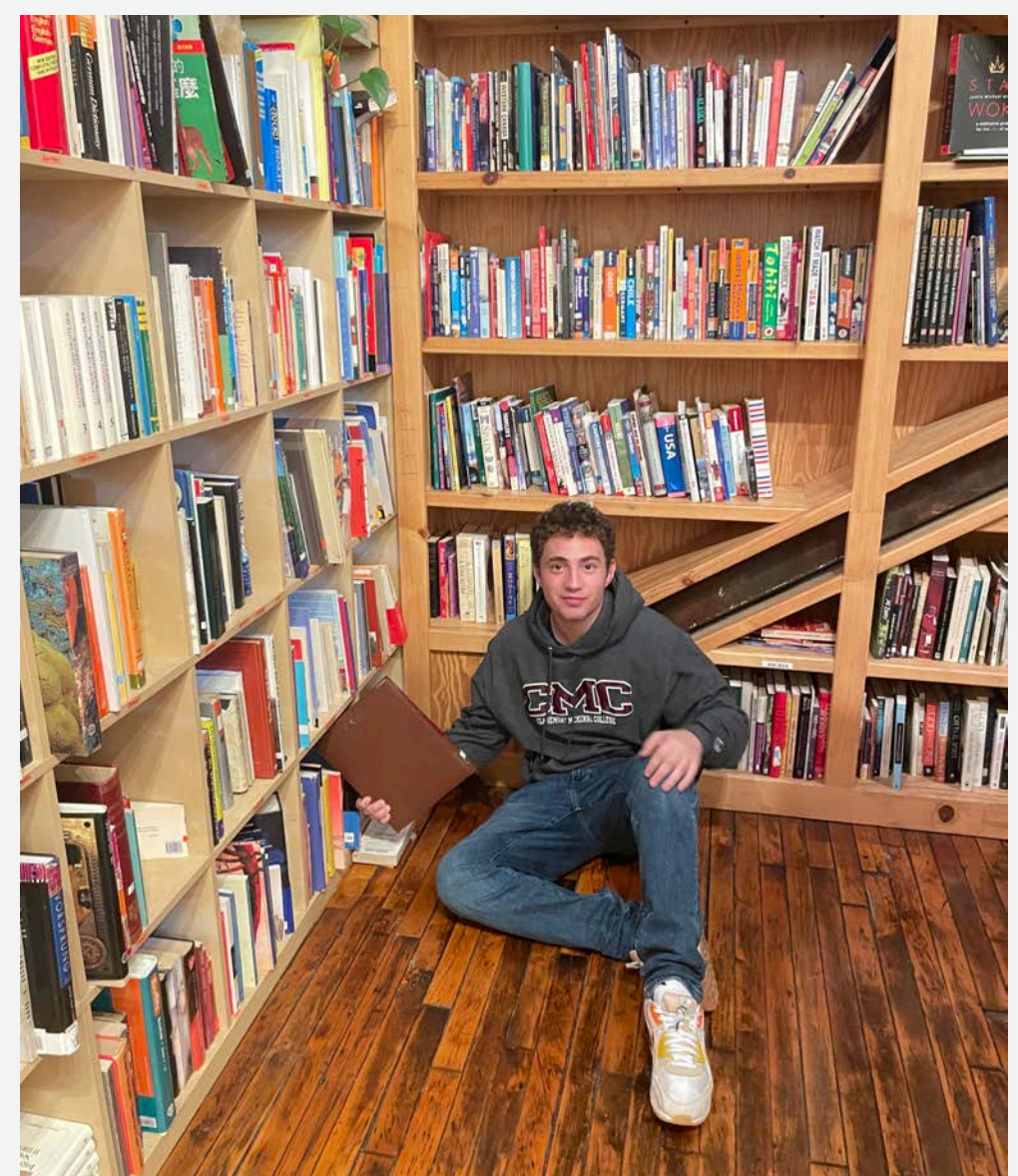


The IDEA task force hosted a book drive where students donated their old high school test prep and/or academic books. These books were then donated to high school students in the greater Claremont and Pomona area.

Amnesty International



The CMC Amnesty International Task Force began volunteering at The Forum, a local used bookstore which uses its proceeds to provide books to prisoners around the country.



Mason Napach '27 volunteering at The Forum

THE ZONE OF INTEREST

FESTIVAL DE CANNES
GRAND PRIX
2023

ACM

Professor Wendy Lower in conversation with producer Jim Wilson and director Jonathan Glazer following the LA screening

The Mgrublian Center co-hosted two screenings of the Oscar winning film, ***The Zone of Interest***. In December, a small number of students joined Center staff/faculty at a private film premier in Los Angeles which boasted a post-film Q&A with the film's producer, Jim Wilson, and director, Jonathan Glazer, with Center director Wendy Lower. At a second public screening at the Laemmle Theater in Claremont more students and audience members participated in a Q&A session with Professor Lower. The Oscar winning film focuses on the commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss, his wife Hedwig, and the banal details of their family life adjacent to the camp. The film depicts their relatively luxurious lifestyle coexisting alongside the horrors and sounds of a concentration camp just over their garden wall. *The Zone of Interest* highlights the relationship of Höss with his wife, children, fellow soldiers, and senior Nazi leadership. The film does not directly portray the victims of the Holocaust or the sights of atrocity at the camp, but relies heavily on sound to depict the atrocities taking place literally next door to the Höss family's daily routine. *The Zone of Interest* later went on to win two Academy Awards at the Oscars, earning the Academic Award for Best Sound and Best International Feature Film.



FREE FILM SCREENING!

THURSDAY, FEB. 1ST
7:10PM
LAEMMLE THEATER
CLAREMONT

Q&A FOLLOWING
THE FILM

"A CHILLING NEW
PERSPECTIVE ON THE
HOLOCAUST."

NOMINATED FOR FIVE
OSCARS INCLUDING BEST
PICTURE

FREE POPCORN & DRINK
WITH TICKET!!

Scan for ticket!

MGRUBLIAN CENTER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS
CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE



Students attending the LA screening with Center staff and Bonnie Abaunza P'18 (center)

ELIZABETH WYDRA '98

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, EQUAL CITIZENSHIP, AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

2024 Women and Leadership Workshop

February 23, 2024



Elizabeth Wydra '98

Elizabeth Wydra is the President of the Constitutional Accountability Center in Washington, DC and focused her keynote on the significance and impact of Supreme Court decisions on women's autonomy, access to healthcare, and reproductive justice, an area which is under increased scrutiny as we head into the fall 2024 election season. In her remarks, Wydra explained how reproductive autonomy is essential to equal citizenship, and how the Supreme Court's reversal of *Roe v. Wade* got the Constitution wrong. She also shared her personal experiences as a woman leader of a constitutional law organization during these often controversial legal battles. The workshop included a lunch, Q&A, and a follow-up discussion and was well-attended by students and faculty from across the 7Cs.

The Center is in a three-way collaboration with the Berger Institute for Individual and Social Development and the Kravis Leadership Institute to comprise the steering committee for the Women and Leadership Alliance (WLA) which hosts an annual workshop on campus. Each year, the direction of the workshop rotates between the three centers, and in 2023-24 it was the Mgrublian Center's turn to take the lead. Each year, the theme of the workshop is decided upon by the steering committee and is in line with the mission of the lead center or institute. This year's workshop, *Women's Leadership, Equal Citizenship, and Reproductive Justice*, focused on the Supreme Court, women's healthcare and reproductive rights. The event featured a keynote address by Mgrublian Center board member and alumna Elizabeth Wydra '98.



Ms. Wydra interacting with students during the workshop



**WOMEN AND
LEADERSHIP
ALLIANCE**

Washington, DC Networking Trek

Over Spring Break, the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights collaborated with the Soll Center for Career Services to send students to Washington D.C. to learn more about careers in politics, government, and public policy. The Mgrublian Center sponsored human rights-related visits at Amnesty International, Constitutional Accountability Center, The Sentry, Simon Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).



Students in the Tower of Faces exhibit at the USHMM

A student on the trip reflected, "The D.C. Networking Trek opened my eyes to alternative opportunities to law school. I am unclear of what I want to pursue as a career, however, meeting with human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, I became more passionate about this field. Furthermore, my understanding of the Holocaust was widened through an amazing tour given by Professor Lower, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have learned more. The Networking Trek was a magnificent experience, and I would recommend this to anyone seeking a job in government."



2024 DC Trek Student Cohort

The trip has sparked further discussions of bringing more human rights clubs to campus and kick-starting more human rights task force groups at CMC. Students have also already gotten connected with employees at Amnesty International and The Sentry to explore summer internship opportunities in DC.



Tallan Donine '21 (right) presenting her work at the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide



Student Assistants Kyra Variyava '25, Labiba Hassan '25, and Savannah Grier '25 moderated the Zoom panel to a classroom of students

Human Rights Career Panel

The Human Rights Career Panel featured a distinguished group of Claremont McKenna College alumni who have made significant strides in the field of human rights. Katrina Weeks '11, Associate Director at Fòs Feminista, highlighted her work advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Global South, underpinned by intersectional feminist and decolonial approaches. Brianna Munoz '18 discussed her career in international development with USAID implementing partners, focusing on transitional justice and the importance of practical field experience. Allie Scott '11, a senior staff attorney at the California Court of Appeal, recounted her journey in immigration advocacy and civil rights, emphasizing the critical role of legal professionals in protecting human rights. Tyler McBrien '14, managing editor of Lawfare, shared his experiences in journalism and international relations, emphasizing the power of storytelling in human rights advocacy. Laleh Ahmad '20, a senior researcher at The Sentry, shared insights from her work dismantling predatory networks and addressing issues of ethical historical remembrance and communal violence. Collectively, the panelists underscored the importance of passion, dedication, and continuous learning in human rights work, encouraging students to seek hands-on experience, network with professionals, and remain adaptable in their career paths. Their diverse backgrounds and achievements illustrated the multifaceted nature of human rights careers and inspired attendees to pursue their own paths with determination and a commitment to justice.



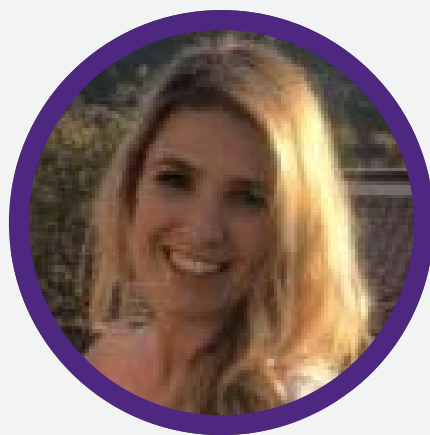
Katrina Weeks '11

Associate Director,
Business Intelligence,
Evaluation and
Research,
International Planned
Parenthood



Brianna Munoz '18

Senior Manager,
New Business
Development,
Europe & Eurasia,
Chemonics
International



Allison Scott '11

Central Staff
Attorney, California
Court of Appeals



Tyler McBrien '14

Managing Editor,
Lawfare



Laleh Ahmad '20

Senior Researcher,
The Sentry

ANOUSH SUNI

LANDSCAPES OF RUIN AND THE AFTERLIVES OF GENOCIDE IN TURKEY



Anoush Tamar Suni

April 2nd, 2024

Athenaeum Lunch Program

Anoush Tamar Suni is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Promise Armenian Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles. Prior to coming to UCLA, she was the Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University, and a Manoogian Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Armenian Studies Program and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan.

Before the 1915 Genocide of Ottoman Armenians, the region of Van, in contemporary southeastern Turkey, held hundreds of active Armenian churches and monasteries. After the destruction of the Armenian community, these ruined structures took on new afterlives as they became part of the evolving environments and communities around them. These ruined spaces play a role in the everyday lives of the people who live among them and shape their historical understandings of the local history and geography. In this talk, Dr. Suni interrogated the afterlives of one abandoned monastery and examined how local Kurds imagine, narrate, and enact the politics of the past and the present through that space of material ruin. Suni's talk was co-sponsored by the CMC history department, the Middle East and North African Studies department (Scripps), and the Middle East Studies department (Pomona).



Column of deportees walking through Harput vilayet during the Armenian genocide. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia

JEAN MICHEL HABINEZA

RWANDA 30: A GENERATION'S QUEST FOR ANSWERS

A Reflection By Ambika Gupta '27



Jean Michel Habineza

April 8, 2024

Athenaeum Dinner

As Rwanda commemorates the 30th anniversary of the Genocide Against the Tutsis, a significant demographic shift has emerged. With over 50% of the population born after the atrocities, a new generation is grappling with the weight of history and the imperative of preventing such horrors from repeating. In this talk, Jean Michel Habineza delved into the complex dynamics of memory, prevention, and reconciliation in a society shaped by the scars of its past. He explored the challenges, fears, and aspirations of a generation living in the aftermath of unspeakable tragedy, seeking answers and forging a path towards healing and understanding.

In just 100 days in 1994, about 800,000 Tutsis were murdered by ethnic Hutu extremists. These horrifying numbers can often feel difficult to comprehend. However, Habineza immediately grounded his audience. He began his talk reading a touching letter to his future child describing the brutality of his past and his hope for his future child. To put this in American terms, Habineza explained how in those 100 days three “9/11’s” occurred daily (in terms of number of deaths). Habineza shared how nearly 30 years after this genocide, he and his generation faced a big question: how do people whose parents were murderers or murdered live together? Habineza shared the story of another one of his peers. After years of grief, his friend visited the man who killed his father in jail. He went to offer forgiveness and was met with hatred. “Disappear from my eyes, or I’ll do to you what I did to your father,” the man in prison said.

As a Rwandan social entrepreneur and co-founder of ‘Peace and Love Proclaimers: Youth for a Change, Habineza has devoted himself to preserving memory, reconciliation, and prevention. He founded a “Walk To Remember” which brought together everyone in the post-Rwandan generation. He was criticized for “bringing the wrong people,” but Habineza thought it was vital to invite everyone. One of the most heartwarming parts of his talk was seeing the connection between him and his former students. Also, Habineza founded iDebate which teaches students “how to question.” Many of his students have won major debate competitions and continue to debate in college programs. Habineza viewed a lack of critical thinking as a root cause of the Rwandan genocide which he hoped to address in his debate endeavors.



Habineza with students from the 5C Rwandan community after his Athenaeum lecture

WELCOMING ANNA ROMANDASH BACK TO CMC

The Watchtower PODCAST

By Joseph Zhong '25 and Joshua Morganstein '25



MACBRIAN CENTER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS
CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE



Scan the Spotify code
above to listen!

April 11, 2024 Special Series

Anna Romandash

WOMEN OF UKRAINE

REPORTAGES FROM THE WAR
AND BEYOND



Ukrainian Voices, vol. 41

ibidem

*Anna's first book, highlighting the
experiences of women during the war,
published in December 2023*

Anna Romandash is an award-winning journalist from Ukraine with extensive experience in Europe and the Middle East. She has published a special series of reporting on the war in Ukraine and has contributed her research to Freedom House, Deutsche Welle, US Embassies, the ICJ and the Council of Europe, as well as held fellowships at CNN and other international news organizations. She was named Media Freedom Ambassador of Ukraine for her human rights and media work, and was among the winners of the European Institute of Mediterranean contest for her reporting. This spring, Anna returned to CMC to report on the ongoing war via a classroom visit and as an interviewee with the Center's podcast team. Students also met personally with Anna, sharing homemade Ukrainian food, at the home of Professor Lower.

Anna is currently a fellow with the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University and is working on a new book about Putin's cultural vandalism in Ukraine.



Anna speaking to students in the classroom (left) and cooking Ukrainian food together (right)

UKRAINE CAN'T HOLD ELECTIONS DURING THE WAR. DOES IT MATTER?

Originally published in April 2024 in the Journal of Democracy

By Anna Romandash

“Were it not for Russia’s war, Ukrainian citizens would have gone to the polls a few weeks ago to pick their president. They would have voted last year, too, in parliamentary elections scheduled for October. Yet neither contest happened. Ukraine’s constitution prohibits elections under martial law, which President Volodymyr Zelensky declared when Russia launched its invasion on 24 February 2022 and has been in force ever since.

“Even without the law, organizing mass elections amid an ongoing invasion poses serious practical challenges: how to run the vote in Russian-occupied territories; how to guarantee voters’ safety; what to do about the millions of refugees abroad; and how to provide the necessary time and space for political campaigning. Plus, running elections costs money, and the Russian assault has cost Ukraine not only invaluable losses in human life and generational trauma, but billions of dollars for defense and reconstruction — with the economic impact of the war exceeding US\$51 billion per year. Yet without fair elections, can Ukraine have a just democracy? As the country and its people battle to survive, do elections even matter right now?

Russia’s propaganda machine has been exploiting the idea that without elections Ukraine’s government is illegitimate. The head of the occupation authority in Crimea (annexed by Russia in 2014), for instance, started a campaign against Zelensky, calling his presidency “illegitimate” to discredit the Ukrainian government in the eyes of Crimeans. Similar narratives are being circulated widely online — mostly by Kremlin-linked troll farms.

The illegitimacy claim is not new. Russia also used it in 2014, when pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich fled Kyiv for Russia and Ukrainians elected the pro-European Petro Poroshenko to replace him. The Kremlin, which did not recognize Ukraine’s 2014 election, claimed that Poroshenko was an “illegitimate” president, too. Of course, the 2014 vote only took place because Yanukovich had unleashed violence against Euromaidan protesters and then fled the country. That left Ukraine with no choice but to select a new president. Today, the logic of Russian propaganda has reversed — Zelensky is labeled illegitimate for not holding elections.

Do the propagandists have a credible claim? Not according to Ukrainians. The Kyiv International Institute of Sociology has found that more than 80 percent of Ukrainians oppose holding wartime elections. Their reasoning is simple: Soldiers wouldn’t be able to vote because they are in the trenches. Polling stations in the rear zone would be easy targets for Russian missiles.



Russia’s brutal ongoing invasion is preventing Ukrainians from holding a presidential election and the campaigning that comes with it. What does that mean for Ukraine’s democracy?

And finally, for most Ukrainians, elections and political campaigning are not a priority — but defending every inch of Ukrainian territory is.

Additionally, Ukrainians still maintain an unusually high level of trust toward authorities. For instance, around 64 percent of voters trust Zelensky six years into his presidency. By contrast, his predecessor, Poroshenko, had the trust of around just 14 percent of the people by the end of his single term; other Ukrainian presidents have had similarly low ratings.

Ukrainian attitudes toward parliament have been trending in the opposite direction. Most do not support its activities and consider it to be a weak and inefficient body. Only 15 percent of citizens trust parliament, and this number has been steadily declining. The mistrust stems from the performance of the MPs themselves — their low attendance in parliamentary meetings, slow policymaking, inability to quickly pass important laws, and lack of clear understanding about their wartime roles.

Yet despite their dislike of the current parliament, most still favor keeping it in place — again, because elections are not the priority right now. Ukrainians do not see how electing new lawmakers would help to defeat Russia, and they fear that such changes could create cleavages within Ukrainian society. The people are instead focused on making the government’s activities more accessible and transparent, and on reinforcing citizens’ ability to advocate for different policies. For instance, civil society pushed for reopening state data registries to track public spending and help prevent corruption. Citing security concerns, the government shut these down right after Russia launched the invasion, but quickly restored access after public outcry.

Democracy by Other Means

What is the state of democracy in Ukraine after two years of Russia’s full-scale war and without elections in sight? Ukrainians are willing to wait for fair and transparent elections until the war is over and a just peace is reached. At the same time, citizens want and advocate for efficient ways to communicate with the government so that policymakers

know how they feel about different political and nonpolitical issues and decisions. Ukraine has a vibrant civil society, mass media, and digital systems; so the people have petitions, communication campaigns, and other tools through which they can tell the government what they want.

If democratic elections are fundamentally vehicles for agreeing on legitimate leaders and voicing popular priorities for government spending and policy, can these be achieved by other means in times of war? Since the invasion, Zelensky's government has increasingly relied on digital tools to collect citizen feedback and interact with Ukrainians who became refugees overnight. Millions need documents while living abroad, and the demand for online tools to access government services has skyrocketed.

The government has, in response, worked to digitalize Ukrainian democracy by creating (or updating) state-run apps that are accessible to all citizens. The app Diia, for example, now has more than twenty-million users. With Diia, citizens can donate to the Armed Forces, request official documents, and pay taxes, and displaced people can apply for state support. Ukrainians can also use the app to vote in state-run surveys — an easy way to voice their concerns.

Diia was used in February to select Ukraine's 2024 Eurovision song, with Ukrainians joking that this was a trial run for the presidential election. But that "trial run" also exposed the fragility of digital-democracy tools: The app crashed for a few hours as more than a million Ukrainians rushed to vote for their preferred song, and the government had to extend the polling period so more people could vote.

Any Ukrainian can also publish and vote for petitions on the president's web portal. Petitions that receive 25,000 votes are automatically passed on to Zelensky or the relevant authorities for mandatory review and response. Petitions are an effective and popular instrument for voicing public opinion on different matters and getting guaranteed feedback from authorities. Even when petitions don't get enough votes, they let the government know what citizens are concerned about most. Many petitions, for instance, call for investigating how different policies are being implemented or for addressing gaps within existing laws.

Through petitions, online campaigns, and other means, citizens continue to push for different policies, to change laws, and even to oust officials accused of corruption. For instance, Ukrainians petitioned for the minister of culture to be fired due to a variety of complaints, including his wartime spending; Zelensky dismissed him in July 2023. Another successful petition called for restoring the mandatory declaration of assets by Ukrainian public servants. Once the petition had 25,000 votes, both the president and parliament responded, and e-declarations were brought back.

Not every petition gets a quick response. This two-way communication is sometimes slow and limited; yet it shows how democratic processes can be preserved even amid war and a humanitarian crisis. In 2023 alone, Ukrainians registered more than six-thousand petitions. Of these, more than a thousand got the necessary 25,000 votes, and 150 have already received a response from the president; the others are pending. Seeing the popularity of this approach, local governments across Ukraine have adopted it for regional matters, allowing citizens to publish and sign petitions that concern their specific localities, municipalities, or regions.

Petitions and digital surveys cannot replace the elections, yet they do reveal some common popular understandings in Ukraine. Ukrainian citizens do want to choose their leaders, but only once it's safe to organize elections. In the meantime, they hope to use and build on different channels of communication with the government so that it can follow up on public demands.

For most Ukrainians, elections for the sake of elections is not a sign of democracy but rather a copy of what's happening in Russia. Russia never fails to hold elections on time — Vladimir Putin was just "elected" for a fifth presidential term in February. Simply holding a vote, however, does not make Russia a democracy. Instead it shows how such contests can be misused to create the façade of democracy when in fact the voting process is neither free nor fair. Conversely, skipping elections due to war doesn't make Ukraine undemocratic. But it does highlight how war and its consequences complicate normal democratic processes that should be in place in peacetime.

Ukraine's democracy remains flawed, but it's still there. And while the government isn't perfect, it is legitimate, and it continues working in a country badly affected by a genocidal war. Ukrainians are demanding more openness from their government and pushing for more accountability — both in the government's execution of the war and its handling of the rebuilding process. They don't always get timely responses, but they still have effective methods for making their voices heard and influencing the government.

The war has forced adjustments to everyday life in Ukraine and made a profound impact on how the country's democracy operates. Yet even in this harsh reality, Ukrainians can criticize their authorities openly, voice concerns, and achieve significant political and social changes through advocacy and other means — all of which shows the vitality and resilience of Ukraine as a democratic state.

Anna Romandash is an award-winning journalist from Ukraine and the author of *Women of Ukraine: Reportages from the War and Beyond* (2023).

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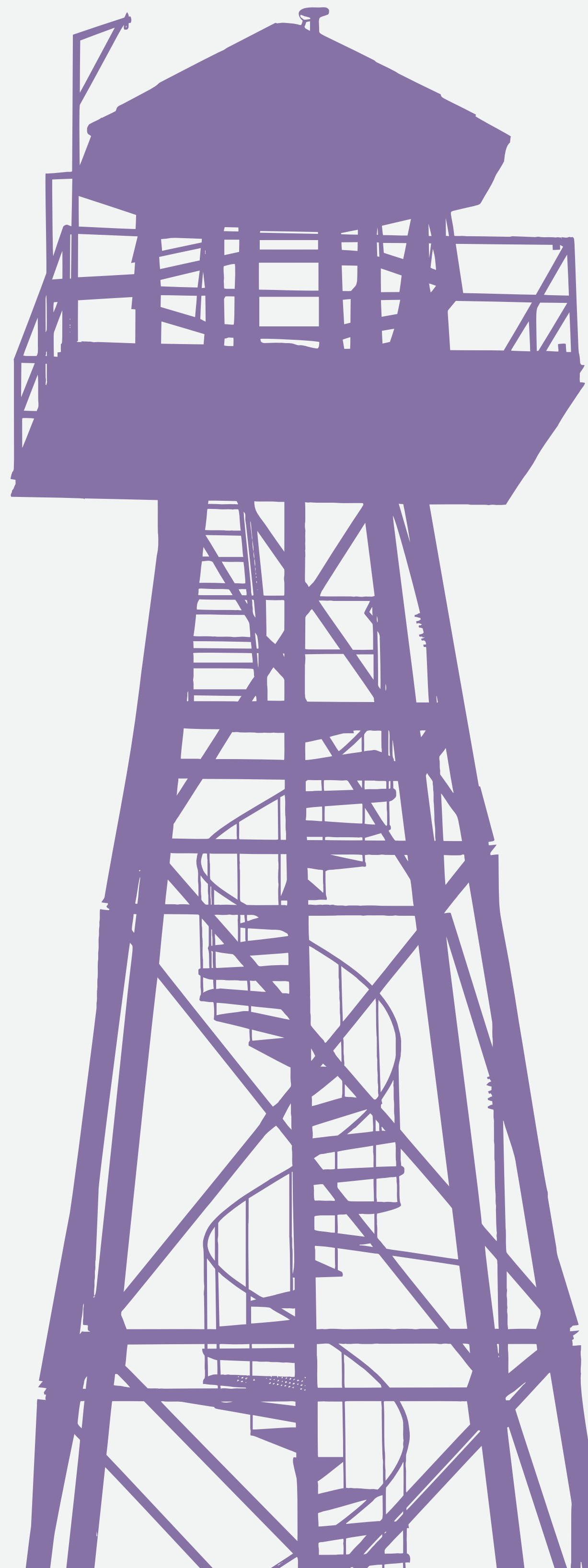
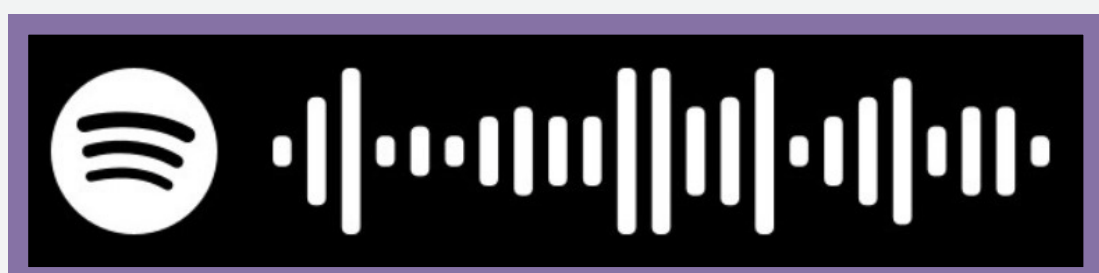
The Watchtower PODCAST

SEASON 2, 2024

The *Watchtower*, the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights podcast program, highlights critical human rights issues worldwide. The *Watchtower* is a student-run organization that interviews scholars to increase publicity, inspire activism, and provide nuanced perspectives on crises around the world. The *Watchtower* began under Joseph Zhong '25 and Joshua Morganstein '25 as co-hosts. This year, the *Watchtower* expanded its team to include Ambika Gupta '27, Sophia Lakhani '27, Alana Nahabedian '27, Mason Napach '27, and Sofia Weinstein '26.

This semester, the *Watchtower* analyzed the rise of Hitler and the parallels between then and now for International Holocaust Remembrance Day. On the next episode, The *Watchtower* interviewed CMC alumna and Mgrublian Advisory Board member Elizabeth B. Wydra to address the state of reproductive rights. Following this, the *Watchtower* met with Peter Balakian — exploring legacy, narratives, and the memory of Armenian art. Episode 10 featured Ukrainian journalist Anna Romandash discussing the current state of the war in Ukraine, and her newly released book on Ukrainian women.

Scan the Spotify code below to find the full line-up of episodes!



Elbaz Post-Graduate Fellowship Presentation: Ari Moore '22

On April 16th, the Mgrublian Center welcomed alumnus Ari Moore '22 to Parents Dining Room to share highlights from his one-year Elbaz Post-Graduate Fellowship. Ari graduated from CMC with a degree in International Relations and the Human Rights, Genocide & Holocaust Studies sequence and was one of two seniors selected from the class of '22 to be awarded the Elbaz Fellowship (Sidney Heath '22 delivered her Elbaz Fellowship presentation in the fall of 2023). Ari centered his presentation on his fellowship with a human rights NGO in São Paulo, Brazil: Conectas Direitos Humanos (connected human rights).



Ari Moore '22

The mission and vision of Conectas is “to enforce and promote human rights and combat inequalities to build a fair, free and democratic society from a Global South perspective and to address injustices and propose solutions that have a positive impact on people’s lives, particularly the most vulnerable in society”.



Elbaz Fellowship Presentation, Parents Dining Room, CMC Athenaeum

Ari’s work with Conectas largely focused on the defense of socio-environmental rights. With indigenous people under constant threat and the climate crisis growing, Ari focused on advocating for the strengthening of indigenous rights in Brazil, demanding accountability for environmentally destructive development projects, and spotlighting the gaps between Brazilian environmental protections and standards set by relevant international organizations.

Since moving back to the US this spring, he's been working as an educational director and teacher in Los Angeles, with future plans of returning to Brazil to pursue a masters in international development. Ari also tap dances (a hobby he was able to enjoy at many events in São Paulo during his fellowship), and is involved with local peace activism.



Imagining the Past: Atrocity, Trauma, and the Armenian Genocide

April 16th, 2024
Athenaeum Dinner

Pulitzer Prize winning poet Peter Balakian discussed how he has worked through filaments of Armenian history to create an inventive body of literature. He explored how his work has moved across generations in his writing of both poetry and a memoir about the Armenian Genocide. How can a past historical event be transformed by the linguistic frequencies of literary imagination in the American present? Balakian discussed how various family figures and ancestors have provided a grounding for his work; his great-great uncle Krikoris Balakian (Bishop in the Armenian Church), was one of the 250 cultural leaders arrested on April 25, 1915 at the onset of the Genocide, and his grandmother Nafina Aroosian who was a death march survivor along with her two young daughters, enduring a harrowing death march into the Syrian desert.

Peter Balakian is the author of eight books of poems, four books of prose, and two translations. His poems have been critically acclaimed in the US and abroad for over four decades and his memoir was a best book of the year for the New York Times, the LA Times, and Publisher's Weekly. Working from a form of poetics he calls "writing horizontal," Balakian's poetry engages a wide range of realities including genocide, war, terrorism, climate change, AIDS epidemic, historical trauma and memory as well as the personal domains of love, death, art, and culture.



Peter Balakian



Balakian with audience members during the book signing following his presentation



Scan the Spotify code
above to listen!

HIGHLIGHTING BOARD MEMBER VOICES:

ANOUSH BAGHDASSARIAN '17



The Center welcomes Anoush Baghdassarian (CMC '17), to the advisory board! After CMC, Anoush completed her J.D. at Harvard Law School and is currently a Law Clerk at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in New York City.

As a newly appointed advisory board member, what interested you most about connecting with the Mgrublian Center in this way?

Everything about it interested me! I can't think of a more fitting and meaningful way for me to honor and express my gratitude for the opportunities provided to me by the Center than by paying it forward in some small way to help ensure current students get everything I did, and more, out of their time at CMC and with the Center. I hope to help ensure that the opportunities available to students are diverse and interdisciplinary, as well as deeply substantive and enriching, so they can leave the Center with a better sense of what they want to do, and with the skillset that will help open doors to those opportunities for them. Through a myriad of different opportunities that's what the Center gave me and I hope that in this role I can support the Center's incredible impact in exploring students' curiosities and fostering their passions.

What are some current human rights issues/policy initiatives you are most passionate about?

I am most passionate about pursuing accountability for atrocity crimes. This can take many shapes and forms and is one of the areas that excites me most about this field and dedicating my efforts to it. To me, "justice" can be achieved when a person's harms are acknowledged, and that acknowledgement is what I hope to dedicate my life to pursuing. This can be through memorialization, bringing criminal and civil cases, reparations, storytelling, political resolutions, and so much more. I hope to work at the intersection of those tools, domestically and internationally, always guided by the wishes of the affected community members for what would help them feel somewhat "whole" again, and like their harms have been acknowledged.

How does the current landscape of human rights differ or mirror the issues that were relevant when you were a CMC student?

I am glad that support for these mechanisms and the field of accountability for atrocity crimes is growing in a way that wasn't apparent when I was a CMC student. I am hopeful that through improving these systems we can get to a more just world. Unfortunately, advancement of these mechanisms is often fueled by atrocity (i.e. we realize we don't have an effective way to respond to an atrocity so we act quickly to create something; e.g. the Holocaust spurred the creation of the Nuremberg trials, the genocides of the 90s prompted the UN ad hoc tribunals the ICTY and ICTR, etc.), however, when such atrocities occur, we have to be ready to build on what we already have, and the world is at an inflection point right now growing in that way in response to current atrocities. We can only hope that will lead to a swifter, more efficient, and more satisfying response for future victims, or, in an ideal world, that it will serve effectively as a deterrent so that these crimes are prevented altogether, or at least prevented to a significant degree.

HIGHLIGHTING BOARD MEMBER VOICES:

SCOTT TATE '80



The Center welcomes Scott Tate '80, to the advisory board! Scott joined the board in the spring of 2024 and is currently working as an attorney in the Bay Area and Boise, ID.

As a newly appointed advisory board member, what interested you most about connecting with the Mgrublian Center in this way?

I became interested in the Mgrublian Center about the time Margaret and Dave Mgrublian '82 decided they would ensure its funding. Of course the Center addresses issues at the core of genocides through history and their application to our times – man's inhumanity to man – a theme as old as man himself. As a liberal arts student at CMC I spent a good deal of time trying to understand the roots and application of these base issues. More recently, Bob Knuth (CMC Development) suggested to me a way to become more involved which I have taken on to (selfishly) allow me to more deeply explore these issues now that I am semi-retired and have some time. Since Peter Balakian spoke this Spring, I have dived into his poetry and history of his Armenian heritage and am now trying to assist a student (Charlotte Jordan, 2023–24 Roth Research Fellow) with some background on the early '80's AIDS crisis as we experienced it in San Francisco when I was a young attorney.

What are some current human rights issues/policy initiatives that you are passionate about? How does the current landscape of human rights differ or mirror the issues that were relevant when you were a CMC student?

Recently, we have been hosting a Ukrainian family in our home and the accounts from Odessa regarding the East are as horrible as one can imagine. The Russian War on Ukraine is particularly interesting to me because there are so many historical themes and issues: the Mother Church in Kiev, the Russian Empire, invasions from the west (Napoleon and Hitler), Stalin's starvation of the population through collectivization and on and on. Like Mao, the Khmer Rouge, Stalin's and now Putin's actions (targeting population centers, schools, hospitals, civilian infrastructure, etc., etc.) demonstrate that this history of "man's inhumanity" shows few (no) signs of ameliorating. Personally, I look forward to greater interaction with students and others exploring and publicizing the events. At this ripe old age, I have found that we (classmates and colleagues) do have some perspectives to contribute to these and other causes (religious education and politics for me.) It has been invigorating to get started. I look forward to the future.



HIGHLIGHTING BOARD MEMBER VOICES: TERI VIETH '81

Interview by Angie Gushue '25

In many ways, Dr. Teri Vieth is a trailblazer. She graduated from Claremont McKenna College in 1981, only 5 years after the men's college transitioned to a coeducational institution. Her interest in the college's management sequence combined with her mathematics major catalyzed her career in economics and finance, though Vieth credits her minor in philosophy for really honing her critical thinking and writing skills. After graduating, she received her MBA at the University of Chicago and worked as an economic analyst for 17 years. Simultaneously, she avidly read scientific books by authors such as David Quammen and became a small plane private pilot. In her 40s, she made an uncommon leap from the finance world into the medical field. After the grueling years of medical school and residency, she practiced emergency medicine until her retirement. From becoming one of the first female students at CMC to entering medical school with almost two decades of finance experience, Vieth's career trajectory marks a lifetime of pioneering different spaces.

At every unique point in her career, Vieth found ways to be an advocate for human rights, the environment, and animals. She coordinated air transport in environmental disaster drills, invested in her emergency medicine studies because she "wanted to be a safety net" for patients, and now spends her free time fostering cats/kittens and volunteering at the local animal shelter. As a Mgrublian Center board member, she supports future generations of human rights advocacy and enjoys "being involved in worldly things."



Vieth's involvement on the board is a full-circle moment for her. As an undergraduate student, she took the course, "The Problem of Evil", taught by former Mgrublian Center director and co-founder, Dr. John K. Roth. His course informed her understanding of philosophy and human rights, and she commented that it remains one of her favorite classes at CMC. Now, as a board member, Dr. Vieth is concerned about immigrant rights, reproductive rights, and sex trafficking. One of her favorite parts of being involved with the center is seeing the work done by the students. She said, "it gives hope for the future." Dr. Teri Vieth's accomplishments in various fields serve as testimony to her adaptability and ingenuity. She inspires us all that no matter what space we occupy, we can always find a way to do good in the world.

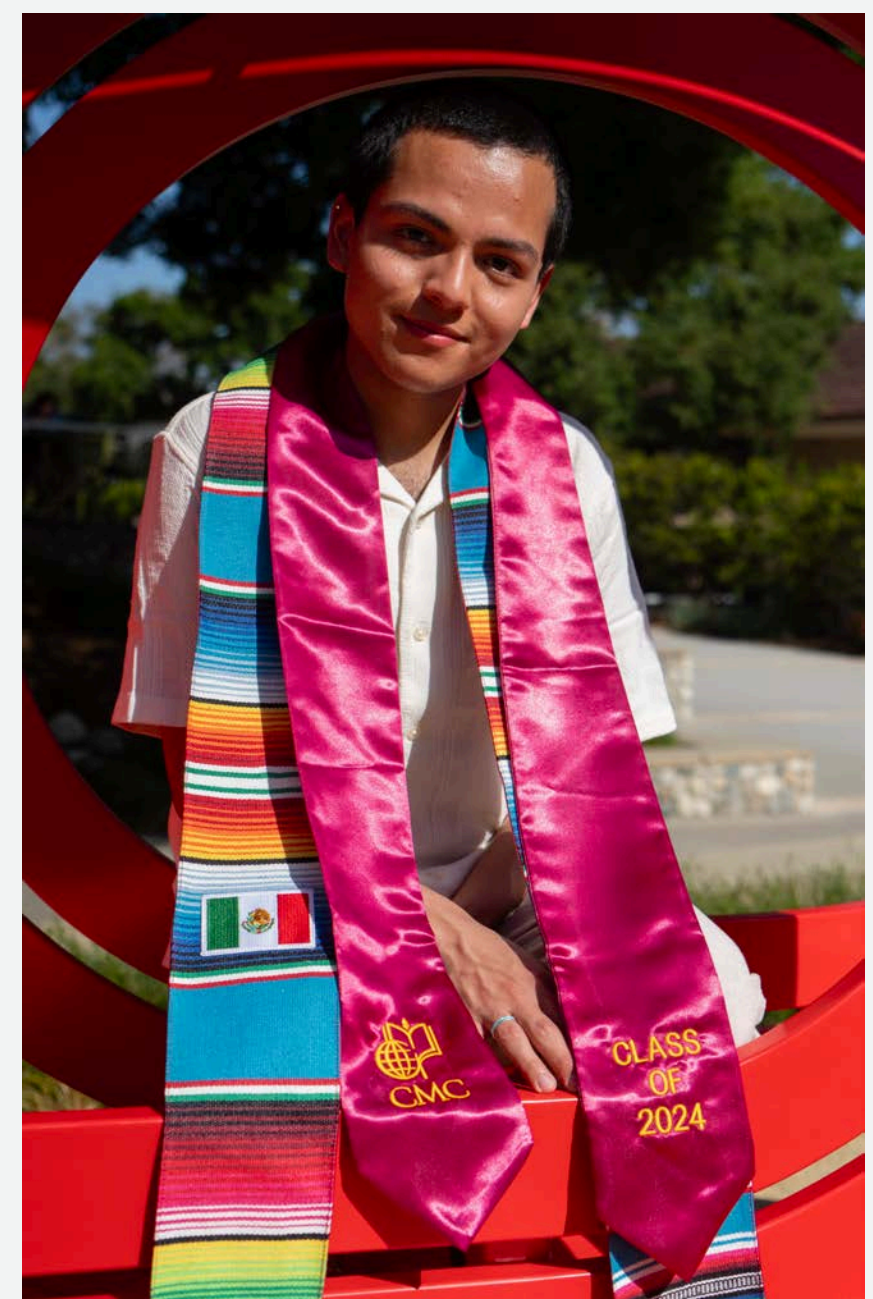
2024 Elbaz Post-Graduate Fellowship Awardees

The Elbaz Post-Graduate Fellowship program is open to all graduating CMC seniors interested in pursuing a career in human rights, Holocaust and genocide studies. The fellowship is awarded for one year following graduation during which the recipient(s) receives funding for a position with a major human rights organization. This year, the Center selected two outstanding Elbaz Post-Graduate Fellows: **Riley Green** (The Sentry, Washington, D.C.) and **José Chiquito** (Sin Fronteras, Mexico City).



Riley Green '24

The Sentry is an investigative and policy organization that seeks to disable multinational predatory networks that benefit from violent conflict, repression, and kleptocracy. “The Sentry is the ideal institution to begin working at the intersection of security policy and human rights advocacy. As a researcher with the Research and Data Team, I will gain skills in investigative research and data analytics while finding my stride as a civilian pursuing a career in security. While collecting data and open source intelligence, I will be engaged in an iterative process of knowledge production that will foster my intellectual curiosity and prepare me to excel in a Master’s Program in Security Studies”.



José Chiquito '24

Sin Fronteras is a Mexico City-based NGO advocating for the protection of migrants and refugees in Mexico. “I am drawn to Sin Fronteras because of the organization’s engagement with public policy. I will join the legal department and work with attorneys to help migrants apply for immigration relief, including asylum status and social services. I am excited to work with and learn from immigration attorneys practicing in Mexico. Their knowledge of Mexican immigration law will help me appreciate the differences between U.S. and Mexican legal frameworks. This will be essential to my formation as a defender of migrants’ rights at the international level”.

CELEBRATING OUR MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

This year, our Mentorship Program has reached new heights with 25 successful matches between students and mentors. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, showcasing the profound impact these connections have had on our students' professional and personal growth.

Highlights from Student Feedback:

- **Securing Internships:** Several students reported landing summer internships through the guidance and support of their mentors.
- **Industry Connections:** Mentors have been instrumental in connecting students with professionals in their field of interest.
- **Interview Preparation and Networking:** Students gained a deeper understanding of the interview process and developed greater confidence in networking.
- **Embracing Opportunities and Travel Tips:** The program has encouraged students to seize every opportunity available to them. Additionally, some mentors, like Mr. Gjortler, have offered practical advice, such as travel tips for students studying abroad in their mentor's home country.

Mentorship in Action: A Student's Reflection

"Through hearing about Anoush's path from college to law school and beyond, I gained a better understanding of how your passions can drive your career. She had a clear interest in human rights, which guided her throughout college and into her professional life. For her, having that north star was crucial, ensuring she was passionate about everything she did. I also hope to find my north star and follow my interests in my career."

Thank you to all our mentors and mentees for making this program a resounding success. Your dedication and engagement are the foundation of this initiative, and we look forward to seeing even more growth and success in the future.

JOHN K. ROTH RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Through the research fellowship program, students have the opportunity to conduct research of their own choosing and design under the guidance of a faculty advisor. Research fellows spend the academic year diving deep into a human rights, Holocaust, or genocide studies project while benefiting from the resources and office space the Center has to offer. On May 2nd, the fellows presented project highlights and conclusions from their research with the greater CMC community.



Pictured left to right: Floribert Rugambage, Anuj Patel, Adam Guggenheim, Charlotte Jordan, Claire Moore, and Evan Sevaly

2023-24 Research Fellowship Projects:

Adam Guggenheim '26 - *From Kyiv and Konstanz - A Comparative Exploration of Human Rights Violations that Impacted the Maternal and Paternal Sides of My Family.*

Faculty Advisor - Wendy Lower.

Charlotte Jordan '27 - *Exploring the Resurgence of LGBTQ+ Stigma Within the Historical Context of Aggression Toward the Gay Community During the AIDS Epidemic.*

Faculty Advisor - Sarah Sarzynski.

Claire Moore '26 - *The Evolution of International Law and War Crime Litigation.*

Faculty Advisor - Jean-Pierre Murray.

Anuj Patel '27 - *The Social Obstacles to Oral Health in Native Communities.*

Faculty Advisor - Christina Bejarano.

Floribert Rugambage '27 - *Breaking the Cycle of Post-Genocide Trauma and Other Detriments: Healing Youth Affected by the 1994 Tutsi Genocide.*

Faculty Advisor - Wei-Chin Hwang.

Evan Sevaly '26 - *Economic Warfare: How Sanctions Contribute to Afghanistan's Humanitarian Crisis.*

Faculty Advisor - Jenny Taw.

2024 Senior Awards

The Mgrublian Center is proud to announce the recipients of this year's senior awards. **Riley Green** was honored with the **Best Overall** award in the Genocide, Holocaust, and Human Rights Studies sequence for her outstanding academic performance and dedication. Additionally, **Laura Somoza-Velez** received the award for **Best Thesis**, recognizing her exceptional research and contribution to the field.



Riley Green '24

"By selecting courses that peaked my interest in security and war studies, interning at the POLIN Museum in Warsaw, and facilitating close relationships with faculty and staff at the Mgrublian Center, I met the requirements without extensive planning. While completing the sequence, I explored a multidisciplinary approach to my degree in International Relations and History that provided an invaluable framework for thinking about atrocity prevention.

On June 22nd, I started hiking the Colorado Trail, a 486 mile long trail from Denver to Durango. I am writing from Lake City, about 130 miles from the southern terminus. Walking across my home state, connecting with hikers from across the country, and creating the space to grow outside of an academic setting has been wildly fulfilling (and terrifying when lightning is involved). After I finish the trail, I'll move to D.C. to start my work as an Investigative Researcher."

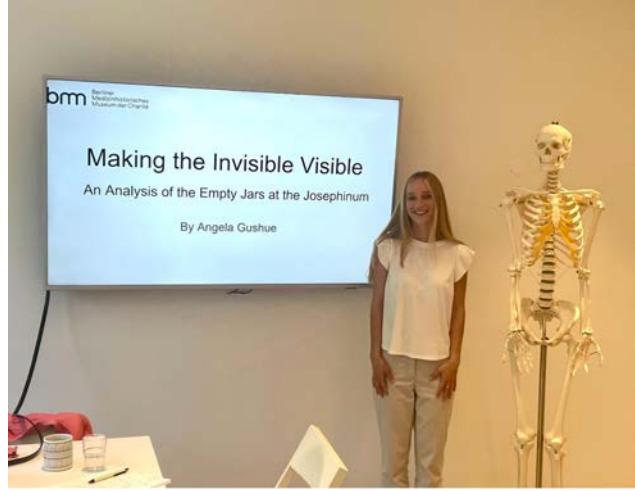


Laura Somoza-Velez '24

This year's recipient of the Best Thesis in Human Rights prize was awarded to CMC senior, Laura Somoza-Velez for her work titled, *Does the Constitution Follow the Flag? The Paradox of Puerto Rican Identity and Citizenship*. As noted by Center director Wendy Lower, Laura's thesis was chosen for its "outstanding academic rigor, alignment with our Center's mission, and original approach to the history of Puerto Rican identity, citizenship and collective rights...and her "clear, convincing case for reimagining citizenship, as well as for real educational and constitutional reforms."

This summer Laura started her first job post-CMC, working as a Communications Associate at Human Rights Watch in their DC office. Laura previously worked as an intern with HRW, sponsored by the Mgrublian Center, during her junior summer.

2024 Summer Interns



Angie Gushue '25

After Innocence – Oakland, CA

Riley Zitar '26

Amnesty International – Washington, DC

Pallavi Raju '25

Charité Berlin Medical University – Berlin, Germany

Angela Gushue '25

Connecticut Against Gun Violence (CAGV) – Greenwich, CT

Alejandro Quiroz '26

Freedom House – Washington, DC

Guadalupe Loza-Mendez '25

Haysbert Moultrie, LLP – Los Angeles, CA

Daniela Brun Matar '26, Rohit Iyer '26, Andrew Rizko '26, and Jaxson Sharpe '26

Human Rights Watch – New York, NY

Yui Kurosawa '26 and Christina Zogopoulou '25

Loyola Project for the Innocent – Los Angeles, CA

Kirby Kimball '25

Luisa Hairabedian Foundation – Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ilma Turcios '25

Musizi University – Kampala, Uganda

Sophia Lakhani '27

POLIN Museum – Warsaw, Poland

Claire Moore '26

Public Counsel – Los Angeles, CA

Stephanie Hernandez '25 and Chris Chung '26

Rerooted – Latin America (Chile, Uruguay)

Melanie Kallah '25

Rerooted – India

Rohan Matthew '27

Simon Wiesenthal Center – New York, NY

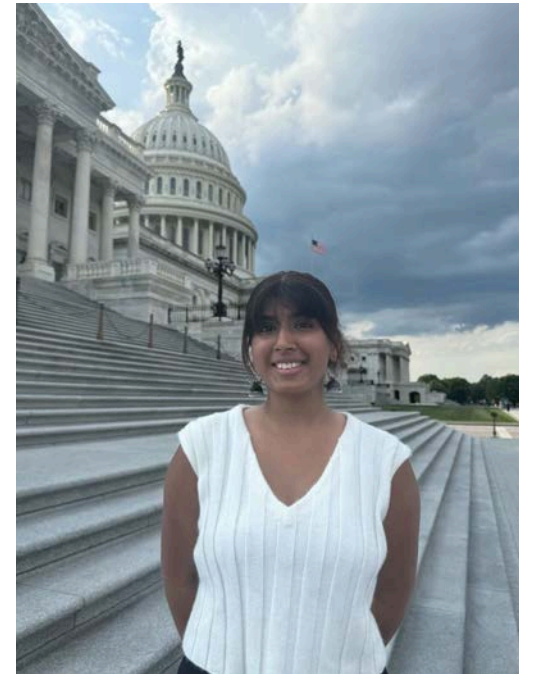
Rachel Svoyskiy '26

The Sentry – Washington, DC

Labiba Hassan '25, Tom Inouye '26, and Evan Sevaly '26

United Religions Initiative – Washington, DC

Jamie Smith '27



Pallavi Raju '25



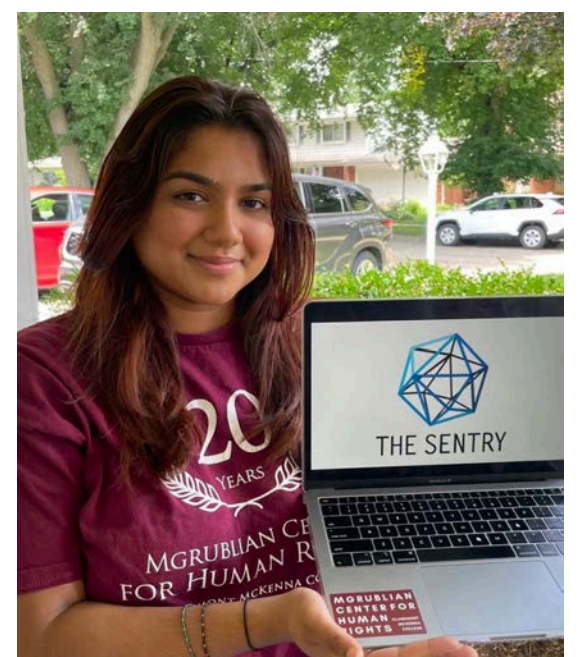
Yui Kurosawa '26



Rohan Matthew '27



Jamie Smith '27



Labiba Hassan '25

Follow us on Instagram to see highlights from each of our interns!

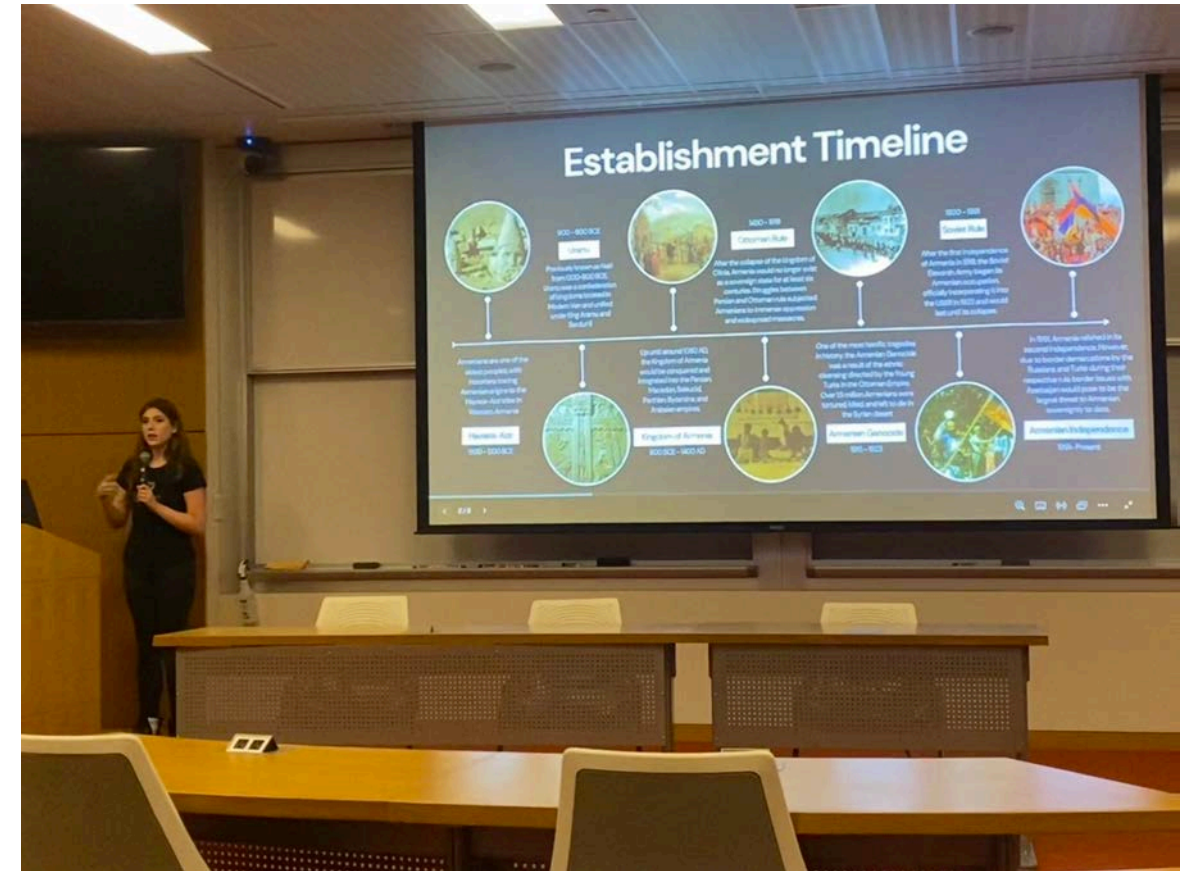
Summer Research Program (SRP)

Echoes of Survival: A Comprehensive Curriculum on Armenian Migration, Genocide, and Diaspora

Alana Nahabedian '27

Faculty Advisor, Heather Ferguson

The Summer Research Program (SRP) provides opportunities for CMC students to conduct research on campus for 8 weeks over the summer. Under the supervision of a CMC faculty member, students work on either a faculty member's research project or a research project of their own design. This summer the summer was pleased to sponsor the research of Alana Nahabedian '27, under the guidance of Professor Heather Ferguson.



Alana presenting her SRP findings, July 2024

I created a comprehensive curriculum that documented the forced displacement of Armenians from the 15th Century BC, before the founding of the Kingdom of Armenia to the present day, examined the causes and effects of imperial conquests and genocide in the region, and explored how these rifts in stability shape the Armenian diasporic communities worldwide.

Embarking on a research project that was so intertwined with my identity granted me the opportunity to not only open myself up to be intellectually challenged, but foster an invaluable space to connect deeper with my heritage than I previously have. I expanded my research capabilities through my fervent exploration of digital and on-site archives, thorough navigation of various library collections, and meticulous inspection of available online resources. I learned to fully embrace the nonlinear nature of the research process, allowing myself to fully engage with the material I encountered, even when its relevance to my project was not immediately clear.

This freedom to explore and delve into my findings with the depth and detail required by such a comprehensive project enabled me to forge a profound connection with the work I was doing, reaffirming my dedication and contribution to Armenian scholarship. Through my continued work as a Student Assistant at the Mgrublian Center, I intend to visit more conferences, consortiums, and presentations hosted by universities and organizations dedicated to Armenian studies.



Alana (second from right) attending the Armenian Genocide Looted Art and Restitution conference at UCLA, February 2024. Pictured with Professor Ferguson (left) and David and Margaret Mgrublian

GET INVOLVED!

There are many ways to get involved with the Center during your time at CMC through our student employment program, research fellowships, academic travel, volunteer task force groups, summer internships, and post-graduate fellowship program. See below for the list of opportunities, eligibility, and relevant application dates for 2024-25.

Student Assistants

CMC first-years, sophomores, juniors, seniors
Application deadline: September 16, 2024
Apply via Handshake

John K. Roth Research Fellows

CMC first-years, sophomores, juniors, seniors
Application deadline: September 23, 2024
Apply via online application

Post-Graduate Fellowships

CMC Graduating seniors
Application deadline: Early March 2025
Apply via email submission

Summer Internships

CMC first-years, sophomores, juniors
Application deadline: March 2025
Apply via Handshake

Human Rights Task Forces

5C first-years, sophomores, juniors, seniors
Contact the Center to get connected!



Mgrublian Center student employees (from left: Kyra Variyava '25, Angie Gushue '25, Shriya Velichala '26) hosting the Center's booth at InsideCMC day, April 2024.



Come see us at our Open House this fall, September 9th from 11am-1pm, Kravis Center 3rd Floor!

LOOKING AHEAD

Fall 2024 Programming

- August 30th, 11am-1pm - Campus Engagement Fair - Parents Field & Roberts Pavilion.
- September 9th, 11am-1pm – Open House, 3rd Floor of Kravis.
- September 9th, 6-8pm – Summer Intern Welcome Back Dinner, KRV 109.
- September 25th, 12:00pm – Stuart Eizenstat, *The Art of Diplomacy*, CMC Athenaeum.
- September 25th, 5:30-8:00pm - Faris Cassell and Marion Lewin, *Inseparable: The Hess Twins' Holocaust Journey through Bergen-Belsen to America*, CMC Athenaeum.
- October 10th, 12:00pm – 2023 Elbaz Post Graduate Fellows Presentation/Panel featuring Miriam Farah '23, Valentina Gonzalez '23, and Michelle Ramirez '23. Panel moderated by Yi Shun Lai, CMC Athenaeum.
- October 17th, 5:30-8:00pm - Masha Gessen, Russian-American journalist and author & LGBT activist, CMC Athenaeum.
- November 13th, 2:00-4:30pm – Mgrublian Center Fall Advisory Board Meeting, Keck Center Library.
- November 13th, 5:30-8:00pm – John K. Roth, *Lessons and Legacies: Probing Holocaust Politics*, CMC Athenaeum.
- November 14-17th, Lessons and Legacies Conference XVII, CMC campus.

Spring 2025 Programming

- April 17th, 2:00-4:30pm– Mgrublian Center Spring Advisory Board Meeting, KRV 367
- April 17th, 5:30-8:00pm – Mgrublian Annual Lecture on Armenian Studies, CMC Athenaeum



MGRUBLIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

***Thank you to our advisory board members, funders, and mentors.
We could not do this without your support!***

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Larissa Abaunza '18
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Brianna Munoz '18
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Paul G. Resnick '70
Kalpana S. Rhodes P'24 P'27
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Lyn Roth
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Sarah Sanbar '17
Allison Scott '11
Mark A. Segal '86 P'15 P'18
Murad Siam
Carter Stripp
Lauren E. Tate
T. Scott Tate '80
Elenor R. Taylor '81
Paul Turner
Dr. Teri L. Vieth '81
Katrina Weeks '11
Edward Weinstein P'26
Elena Weinstein P'26
Candice W. West
Oliver Wilcox
Carolyn Williams
Elizabeth B. Wydra '98
Colleen Y. Yasukochi P'22
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Kirsti L. Zitar '97 P'26



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The Watchtower



Claremont McKenna College

The Kravis Center, 3rd Floor

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