

THE MGRUBLIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



"TAKE NOTHING GOOD FOR GRANTED"
- JOHN K. ROTH

A Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Now at the eventful start of 2025, we are reminded of the immense value of institutions like the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights. This past year, we've explored, learned, and grown. It's a privilege to share this year-end edition of our newsletter with you, with more to come this spring.

This year has been filled with opportunities that have challenged us to think critically and act meaningfully. Through the Mgrublian Center's programming, we've been able to engage in transformative conversations and initiatives. The Watchtower podcast allowed us to learn from incredible guests, while our work through the task forces provided avenues for collaboration with local non-profits and participation in impactful dialogues. These experiences have broadened our perspectives and deepened our commitment to championing human rights.

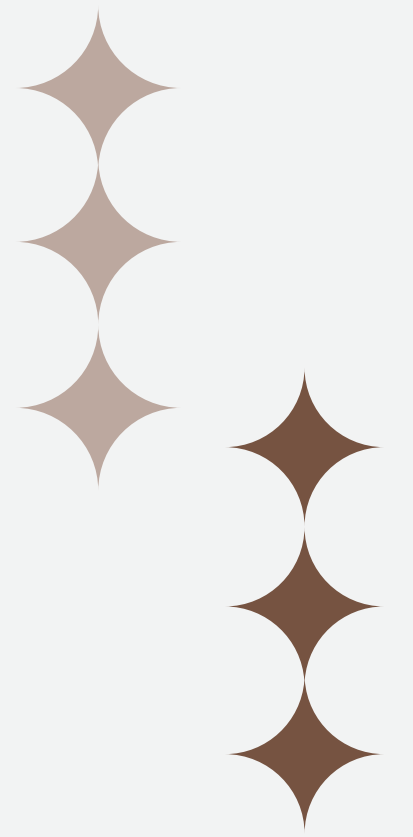
Reflecting on this past year, we've seen how journalism, multimedia, and activism can come together to spark meaningful conversations and amplify the voices of those advancing human rights causes. Through this newsletter, we've sought to illuminate complex issues and celebrate the efforts of our community.

We invite you to explore the pages of this newsletter, immerse yourself in the stories and initiatives shared within, and feel inspired by the collective efforts of those dedicated to making a difference.

Thank you for your continued support of the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights. Your engagement propels our mission forward, and we're excited to grow together in the semesters to come.

Warm regards,
Ambika Gupta '27 & Maram Sharif '26
Co-Editors

Inside THIS ISSUE



04 Task Force Updates

05 Podcast Program

06 Summer Interns

09 Stuart Eizenstat

10 Faris Cassell &
Marion Lewin

11 Voter Education
Week

12 2023 Elbaz Fellowship
Presentations

13 Masha Gessen

14 Nova Exhibit

16 Election Conference

18 John K. Roth

20 Lessons & Legacies

22 Professor Highlight:
Michael Fortner

24 Professor Highlight:
Lisa Koch

26 Visiting Professor Highlight:
Isidro González

28 Board Member
Highlights

30 Class of '24:
Dana Villasenor

31 Human Rights
in Somaliland

32 International
Detention

33 Book
Recommendations

35 Student Staff &
Research Fellows

43 Looking Ahead

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 fall 2024.

Amnesty International



The Amnesty International Task Force had an incredible semester, making strides in raising awareness and advocating for human rights. The group published an impactful newsletter focusing on international detention practices, hosted a moving screening of *The Swimmers* documentary, and organized a powerful "Write for Rights" campaign, where participants wrote letters on behalf of individuals affected by human rights abuses.

Special Recognition: A heartfelt shoutout to Amnesty International's newest leaders: Abigail Niquette '28, Gehua (Sunny) Wen '28, Kimmy Doan '27, and Davin Khan '28. Your dedication and leadership have been instrumental in driving these efforts forward!

Keep an eye on their work as they continue to champion important causes in the semesters ahead. Follow @am.nesty.claremont on Instagram and scan the QR code at right to read our newsletter!



Women's Rights Task Force

In partnership with the Students Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation (SACSE) Task Force, we hosted an engaging virtual panel focused on careers dedicated to combating sexual exploitation. Our inspiring guest speakers shared their professional journeys, offering valuable insights and advice for students aspiring to enter this critical field.

Looking ahead to early next semester, the Women's Rights Task Force is excited to host a documentary screening and contribute to organizing the annual Women in Leadership Alliance Workshop.

Students Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation (SACSE)

Students Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation (SACSE) is committed to ending gender-based violence by combating exploitation in the sex trade.

This semester we hosted two events, the first in collaboration with the anti-sex trafficking club WorldWE Youth 5C where Deputy Director of World Without Exploitation and leading policy expert and survivor of prostitution, Alisa Bernard, spoke on the most prominent global and domestic policy models addressing prostitution, what advocacy looks like in the United States, and what legislation best supports those exploited in the commercial sex trade.

Later in the semester SACSE and the Women's Rights Task Force put on Careers Combatting Sexual Violence where students learned from anti-GBV leaders in the fields of social service provision, law, and policy advocacy on why their work is essential for addressing sexual violence. Program Director of the EMPOWER Center at Sanctuary for Families, Mitha Choudhury, Chief of the Gender-Based Violence Division of the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, Michelle Kaminsky, and Policy Associate at Rights4Girls, Ashley Staggers, spoke to students about what they can do to prepare for a career in this movement. In the spring, we look forward to hosting our first event at the Athenaeum.



The Watchtower

PODCAST

SEASON 3

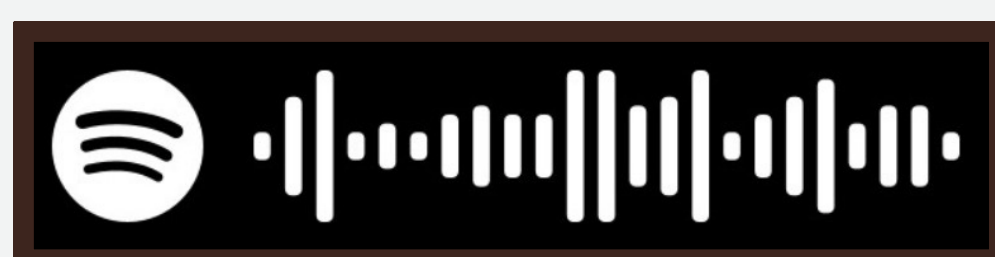
The Mgrublian Center's Watchtower Podcast gives students affiliated with the center an opportunity to spark dialogue concerning human rights issues worldwide. Run entirely by student assistants, and led by Joseph Zhong '25 and Alana Nahabedian '27, The Watchtower features journalists, scholars, and professionals in the field. Student assistants explore different topics by preparing for the podcast interview, and each episode highlights human rights issues in our world. This season, The Watchtower featured impactful stories and conversations that emphasize important components of human rights.

In October, The Watchtower's third season was kicked off with the episode: "Negotiating History: Insights from Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat," where Joseph and Alana sat down with Mgrublian Center honorary advisor board member, Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat to discuss his professional journey in the field of human rights and foreign policy. Ambassador Eizenstat was the U.S. Deputy Secretary of the Treasury (1999-2001) and a prominent figure in the field of Holocaust restitution. This episode featured important insights from Eizenstat and his advice for students considering working in human rights, government, and related fields.

In November, Joseph, alongside Sasha Shunko '25, enlightened listeners with twins Marion Ein Lewin and Steven Hess' story of survival during the Holocaust in "Keeping Memory Alive - Narrating the Holocaust Through the Eyes of the Twins Who Survived." Lewin and Hess provide testimony of their survival at Bergen-Belson. Their account is a harrowing yet empowering recollection, highlighting the power of narrative and testimony in the defense of human rights. The twins' story is brought to life by author Faris Cassell who helped them publish the memoir, *Inseparable: The Hess Twins' Holocaust Journey through Bergen-Belsen to America* (2023).

In December, "Academia's Role in Genocide Prevention," was hosted by Sasha and Ambika Gupta '27, The episode highlighted the importance of the study of genocide in academic settings, using Dr. Alexis Herr's insights. As a class of 2007 CMC alumna, Dr. Herr (Adjunct Professor of History, University of San Francisco) has dedicated her career to human rights and genocide prevention in both nonprofit and academic environments. The episode offers an educational approach to studying genocide as a difficult, yet essential academic tool.

We look forward to beginning our winter 2025 season with the release of an episode featuring John Roth, "Revisiting the Holocaust with a Modern Lens", which will be shared on January 27th, International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Access all past and current episodes of The Watchtower by scanning this code in Spotify:



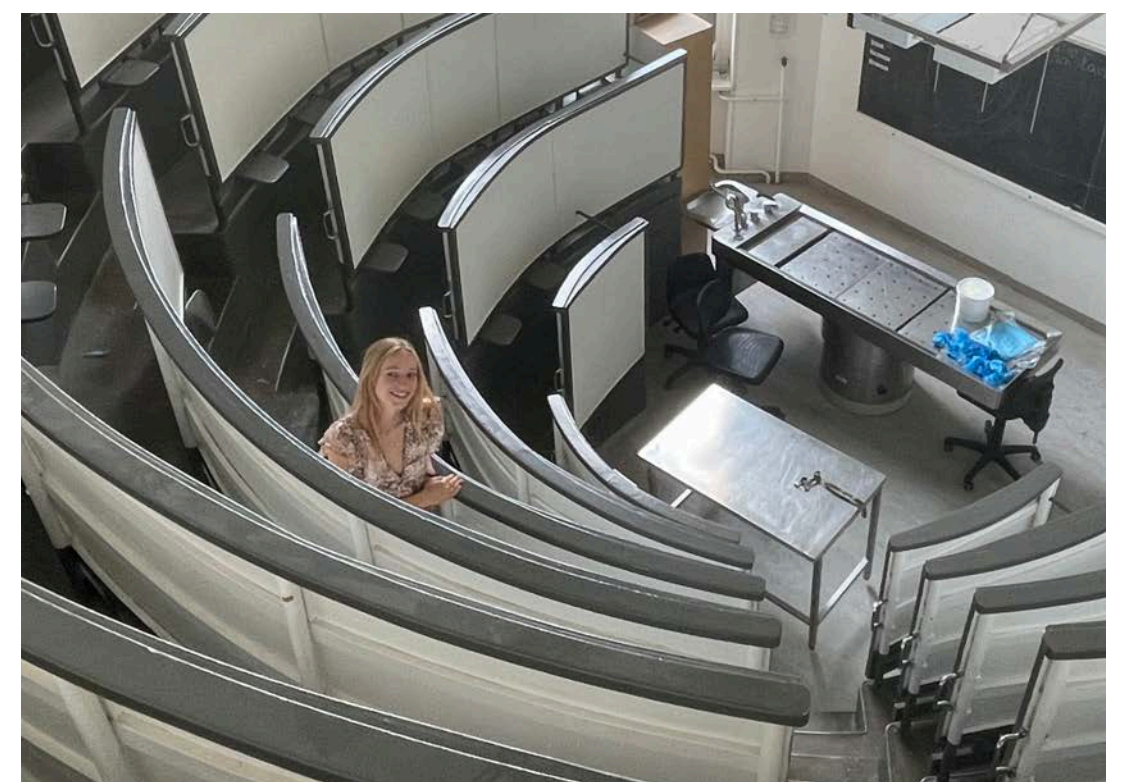
HIGHLIGHTING SUMMER INTERNS

ANGELA GUSHUE '25

**Charité Berlin Medical University -
Berlin, Germany**

In May 2024, I left the U.S. with a suitcase full of medical history books and Mgrublian Center swag and headed to the Charité Medical University in Berlin, Germany. There, I spent a month researching the history of Nazi psychiatry, shadowing autopsies, and visiting several Holocaust sites and other medical history museums in Germany and Austria. After returning to campus, I continued my research, meeting weekly with Professor Lower to discuss primary and secondary sources on racial hygiene and Nazi psychiatry. With the Center's sponsorship, I have been able to craft my own research project, independently visit memorials, museums, and hospitals abroad, and work one-on-one with leading medical history and human rights scholars, such as the Director of the Berlin Medical History Museum and our very own Director of the Mgrublian Center, Professor Wendy Lower.

This summer opportunity completely ties my three major interests together: medicine, research, and human rights. Taking part in this interdisciplinary research means helping uncover how the power of medicine has been abused in the past and how we can use this information to make changes in healthcare practices. As an aspiring doctor, being part of this change feels incredibly rewarding. This was all made possible thanks to the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights.



MELANIE KALLAH '25

Rerooted – Chile, Uruguay

This past summer, I worked with CMC alumna and Mgrublian Center board member, Anoush Baghdassarian '17, who along with a Pomona alumna started the organization Rerooted. I was attracted to this organization because I have an affinity for oral histories. I've done a lot of work recording the oral histories and testimonies of my own family, so I admired Anoush's work because she was doing that on a much greater scale, preserving the testimonies of families from the Armenian Genocide across the diaspora. The Armenian Genocide also included the Assyrian Genocide, which is part of my family's history as well. Therefore, I knew I wanted to help record those histories and be part of preserving these important testimonies.

Before I went to Latin America, I spent a month in Chile and a month in Uruguay. Once I was on the ground, I was recording one or two interviews a day, each ranging from an hour to two hours long. We would walk through their ancestral history with as much information as they knew, discussing their relationships with the diasporic community and their own identity. I always liked to end the interview by asking about their hopes and desires for Armenia—whether political, social, or cultural. I also wanted to create a historic ethnic map of Uruguay, highlighting important locations for the Armenian community: where most people disembarked from the ships, where the community first settled, the significance of each historic location, and how they built up their community.

In my interviews, I would sit down with a person, and within 10 minutes, they were sharing a very vulnerable history. Each story was fascinating but also very heavy. One interview that stayed with me was with a 96-year-old woman. She was probably the most lucid person I spoke to out of all my interviews, which was so impressive given her age. She had firsthand memories of the genocide and its impact on her parents.

This internship affirmed two things for me. First, I want to work directly with people—face to face, interacting with them, and getting to know their stories. Second, stories about family histories dealing with genocide or oppression on such a grand scale are incredibly important to preserve. It was empowering to have people trust me with their stories and to have the ability to preserve them. It just affirmed that this is what fuels me—not just working face-to-face with people, but helping them and being part of their deeply impactful stories.



PALLAVI RAJU '26

Amnesty International – Washington, DC

Over the past summer, I had the opportunity to volunteer for Amnesty International as a Program Intern for their Refugee and Migrant Rights (RMR) team. Kirsti Zitar at the Mgrublian Center was a super helpful mentor and guided me when I applied for the partnered internship opportunity with Amnesty. I worked hybrid in Washington D.C. and absolutely loved it. My direct supervisor was Amy Fischer, who is the Director of the RMR team at the D.C. office and one of the most inspiring advocates in the field. I was interested in this position not only because Amnesty International is a Nobel Prize winning organization with amazing resources and opportunities, but also because I have been attempting to learn more about human rights during my academic career at CMC.

My dad came to the U.S. from India, fleeing religious persecution in the 1990s, and as a first generation student, immigration is always a topic I can bring a personal perspective to. Not only was I building on my personal experiences, but also got to peek into how civil society engages with policymakers. Amnesty was a super stimulating organization, in which I used my research skills most often to draft memoranda and prepare Amy for her testimony in front of a House Subcommittee. I learned about countless policies and exactly what roles legislators and governors play in immigration in the U.S. I took away a lot from the internship, but mainly it made me realize how complicated advocating for human rights on a political stage can be. When Amy and I were conducting Hill meetings and asking members of the House to sign onto a bill to help newly arrived migrants, it was astonishing to see how many (even those who run on a platform of immigration reform) refused to do so. Americans think that immigration policies are difficult and unachievable, but that's not true. What I learned from Amnesty demonstrated that effective and sustainable immigration reform will only come when we treat migrants with dignity and accept that they are here to stay and contribute to American society to the best of their ability; we should clear pathways in order for them to do so.



Stuart Eizenstat:

The Art of Diplomacy: How American Negotiators Reached Historic Agreements that Changed the World

September 25, 2024 - CMC Athenaeum

A Reflection by Shiv Parihar '28

Stuart E. “Stu” Eizenstat has held a myriad of titles ranging from Ambassador to the European Union to Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. In addition to his public service, Eizenstat serves as an honorary member of the Mgrublian Center’s board of directors, which co-sponsored this event with the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies. In his remarks, Ambassador Eizenstat discussed his role in American government from the Carter presidency onwards, commenting on current politics to present his dark prognostications of what the foreign policy of a second Trump term might look like.



Stuart E. Eizenstat



I was most struck by Ambassador Eizenstat’s description of his political rise. As with many stories, it was one that included a bit of luck. Evincing his soft accent, Eizenstat is a son of the South who entered politics, not at the realm of international diplomacy, but as an advisor to a 1970 Georgia gubernatorial campaign. The candidate Eizenstat worked for won and went on to embark on a long shot presidential campaign with some of his old gubernatorial staff. It was this historical oddity that brought President Carter to Washington with Stuart Eizenstat in tow. Eizenstat’s memories were reminiscent of those from other Carter Administration officials, those of a rag-tag team who saw themselves as taking on Washington. As he recounted successes such as the negotiation of an Egyptian-Israeli peace plan at the Camp David Accords, Eizenstat seemed to take a special pride in building these accomplishments from the perspective of his outsider team.

At 81 years old, Eizenstat’s mind was as razor sharp as anyone else I have heard speak at the Ath. He is one of the few presenters I have seen come forth with a slide deck and he approached every student question with enthusiasm. At the core of his argument was the idea that foreign policy agreements had been reached by a diplomacy that took a wide view of the world and strove to work within the personal elements of world leaders. As an example, he recounted the importance of including conversations about Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin’s grandchildren to keeping him at the table for the Camp David Accords. Eizenstat’s statements seemed crucial in reminding students, particularly those aiming for a future in international relations, of the importance of the personal in issues of such scale that one often feels entirely detached. His closing warnings of the risks of an “America first” foreign policy remain to be seen.

Faris Cassell and Marion Ein Lewin: Inseparable: The Hess Twins' Holocaust Journey through Bergen-Belsen to America

September 25, 2024 - CMC Athenaeum

A Reflection by Shiv Parihar '28



Marion Lewin, née Hess, an 86 year old survivor of the Holocaust who lived through the horrors of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp as a young child, visited the Athenaeum for a dinner program on September 25th. Along with author Faris Cassell, who wrote of Lewin's life in her book *Inseparable: The Hess Twins' Holocaust Journey through Bergen-Belsen to America*, the evening event also featured the day's lunch Ath speaker, Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat, Lewin's partner who interviewed both Cassell and Lewin in a panel style conversation.



Faris Cassell and Marion Ein Lewin

The three panelists' closeness was deeply evident in their friendly banter. At the urging of Eizenstat, Lewin shared the remarkable story of her introduction to Ms. Cassell. After writing an article thanking first responders to the Covid-19 crisis, an observer fixated upon the traditional Dutch clothing of a childhood photo Lewin shared. After it went viral online along with aspects of her story as a Holocaust survivor along with her twin, Ms. Cassell (soon after writing the 2021 Jewish Book Award winning book *The Unanswered Letter*) reached out to begin to chronicle her story.

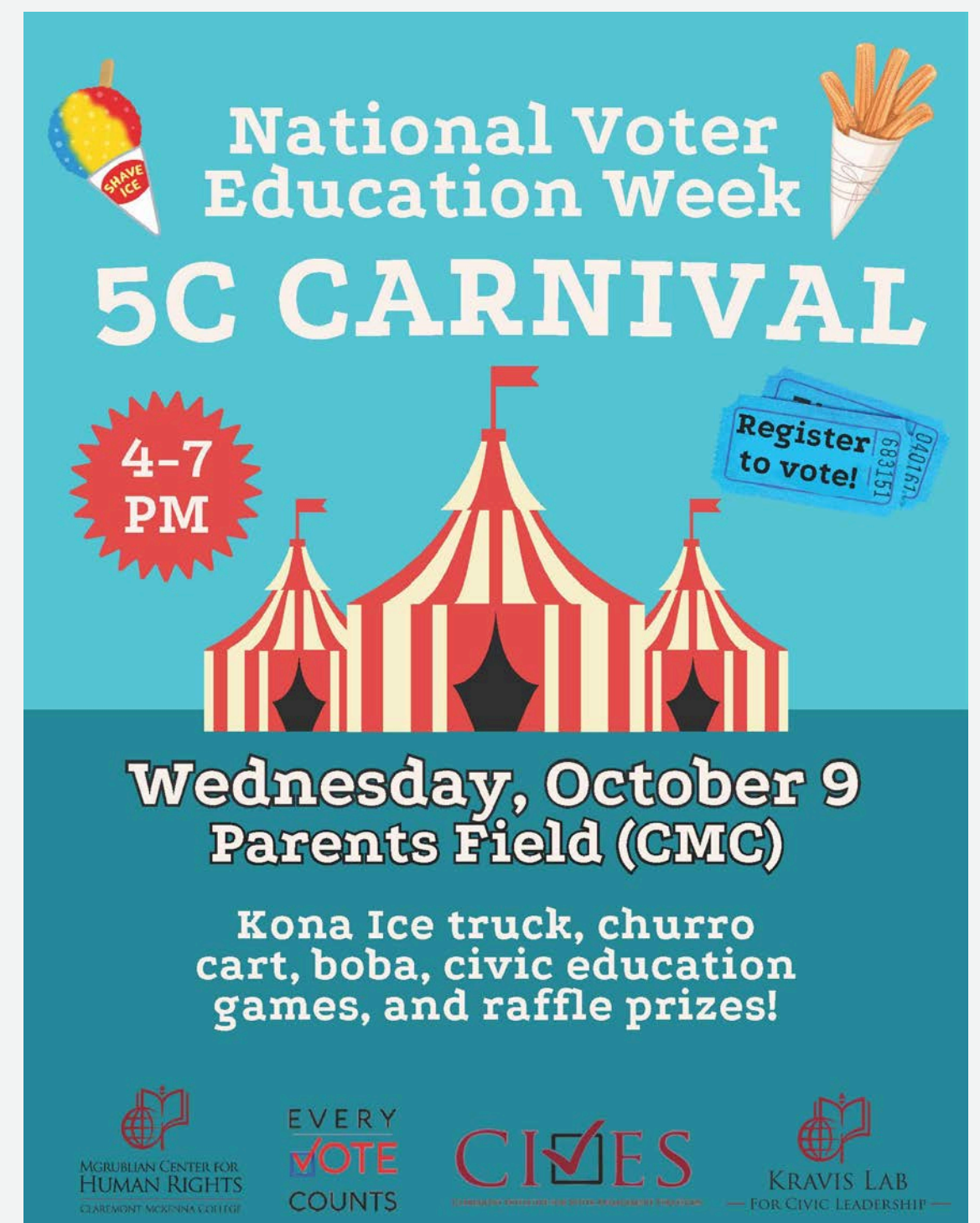
Sharing the fears of her father in his dying words, "I'm scared for democracy...I'm scared for Israel," Lewin spoke with hope as she talked about the role of Israel as a homeland for the Jews, a necessary creation of the brutality of the Holocaust and a shining beacon of hope for millions of Jews the world over. Although her story includes first hand experience in the darkest chapters of human history, Lewin's talk was one of hope and gratitude. Her deep belief in the truth of the American idea, the "American dream" that some today doubt, was vocal. Where else could she have gone from a concentration camp to Columbia University? Lewin's remarkable life story and her resilience was underscored by the sheer gratitude she holds for our world and the opportunities she has been able to enjoy.

By far, this was the most personally impactful event I have attended as a college student. Lewin's talk came the same day as the death of my Aunt Melanie, a dear family member whom I was particularly close to. Having received the notice of her death earlier that day, I was trapped in an emotional farrago and unsure whether or not I should go forth to the dinner and talk that night. I am glad that I did. Lewin's exuberance for life, her appreciation of loss, and her candor on painful issues impacted my heart deeply in a tumultuous personal time. I am compelled, I feel, to close this piece by imploring readers, particularly those in my generation and younger, to interact with and listen to our elders, particularly those with stories such as Ms. Lewin's. They will not be with us forever; we enjoy a special opportunity to interact with living history and to learn from those who lived through the most monumental moments in human history.

National Voter Education Week

5 C Carnival - October 9, 2024

The Mgrublian Center for Human Rights co-sponsored a voter registration drive with the Kravis Lab for Civic Leadership and its Claremont Initiative for Voter Engagement Strategies (CIVES). This three hour event included prizes awarded to students who showed up to receive information about registering to vote, whether on campus or using their home address. The fair featured games such as a trivia about American politics and U.S. history. Hundreds of students from across the Claremont Colleges showed up to the afternoon event, representing states from Washington to Florida. Likewise, Democrats, Republicans, and students intending to vote for third parties all showed up to ensure that they could have a voice in our democracy at this successful event.



Elbaz Family Post-Graduate Fellowship Panel: Class of 2023



October 10, 2024 - CMC Athenaeum

By Michelle Lee '28

The Elbaz Family Post-Graduate Fellowship is open to all graduating CMC seniors. This special panel event featured the class of 2023 fellows: Miriam Farah, Valentina Gonzalez, and Michelle Ramirez and was moderated by Yi Shun Lai '96, author and Interim Assistant Director of Fellowships Advising. During the conversation, panelists reflected on their fellowship experiences, highlighting the challenges and rewards of working in human rights advocacy. Farah spoke about her passion for civil rights law, shaped by her academic work at CMC and her experience as a civil rights paralegal at Relman. Gonzalez shared how her time at Human Rights Watch deepened her understanding of global human rights issues, particularly in media and communications strategy. Ramirez discussed her work in impact litigation and how her senior thesis influenced her commitment to social justice.

Audience member, Guadalupe Loza-Mendez '25, reflected on the conversation: "Listening to Valentina Gonzalez, Michelle Ramirez, and Miriam Farah as panelists at the Athenaeum was incredibly powerful. I was inspired to hear how their passion for human rights has carried into their post-graduate lives and how the Elbaz scholarship has supported them. During the Q&A session, when asked about managing emotional fatigue while working with such heavy topics in their career, all three panelists described the importance of balancing work and personal life. As human rights defenders, their work naturally influences their everyday lives, and their key message was the importance of prioritizing personal wellbeing to sustain and revitalize the powerful work that needs to be done. I look forward to following their journeys and the incredible impact they will continue to make!"



From left: Yi Shun Lai '96, Elyssa Elbaz '94, Michelle Ramirez '23, Miriam Farah '23, Valentina Gonzalez '23, Kirsti Zitar '97, and Professor Wendy Lower

Learn more about the Elbaz Post-Graduate Fellowship program and where previous graduates have worked on our website, <https://human-rights.cmc.edu/elbaz-family-post-graduate-fellowship/>

Masha Gessen: Politics of the Past and Politics of the Future

October 17, 2024 - CMC Athenaeum

A Reflection by Shiv Parihar '28

In partnership with the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies, the Mgrublian Center was pleased to welcome journalist and one of Russia's premier LGBT+ activists, Masha Gessen, to the Athenaeum. Prior to their main room dinner presentation Gessen also met with students from the Keck and Mgrublian Centers as well as members of Professor Hilary Appel's Russian Politics class in a private reception.



Masha Gessen

And while Mx. Gessen's subsequent dinner presentation focused on their desire to see American politics orient itself rhetorically towards the future rather than the past, the reception provided a great opportunity for students to ask more specific questions about their long career as a journalist and activist in Russia.

During the dinner presentation, Mx. Gessen set the tone by somberly noting the "dire" state of LGBT+ rights in the Russian Federation. Tracing the paramount role of anti-LGBT sentiment in the propaganda strategy of the Putin regime to 2012, Gessen explained the extent of censorship in Russia, extending to private art and writing, and the recent draconian expansions of legislation to outlaw gender transitions entirely and prohibit marriage for those who have previously obtained a gender transition. In their remarks, Mx. Gessen doubted predictions that Russia is on the verge of falling apart, arguing that any possibility of the ethnic separatism and political opposition the Putin regime has so thoroughly policed reaching a boiling point largely died in 2022 with the possibility of a significant Ukrainian advance to retake territory rather than remain on the defensive.



*Private reception with Gessen and students
from the Keck and Mgrublian Centers*

However, Gessen waved away criticisms of Russian opposition as overly urban, noting that in a nation like Russia, "everything is urban." However, they criticized the Russian opposition, particularly remnants of the late Alexei Navalny's organization, for overly focusing on anti-corruption efforts as opposed to anti-war efforts, stating that on both strategic and practical grounds, "this is not a good time for Russian opposition abroad." Gessen predicted the war in Ukraine would drag on ever further as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cannot be convinced to cede territory to Russia in the wake of anti-Ukrainian massacres perpetrated by Russian forces,

describing the situation in Ukraine as "not an occupation of land," but "an occupation of people." Perhaps setting the tone for the Athenaeum talk they followed the reception with, Gessen described allegations of Russian political interference in American elections as a "crutch for the American political imagination" that failed to capture the complexity of Russian strategy or American politics.

FROM CELEBRATION TO TRAGEDY: THE NOVA MUSIC FESTIVAL ATTACK COMMEMORATED IN NEW EXHIBITION IN L.A.

By Annie Bernstein '27

In a dimly lit 50,000 square foot warehouse in Culver City, Los Angeles, an exhibition titled “The Nova Music Festival Exhibition: The Moment Music Stood Still” drew crowds from August 17 through late October 2024. The exhibit was dedicated to the victims of the Nova Music Festival, which took place in the Negev desert on October 7, 2023, and was brutally interrupted when Hamas militants launched a deadly attack that left over 400 festival-goers dead, many more injured, and 45 taken hostage to Gaza. The exhibition is a chilling commemoration of the horrors that unfolded on that tragic day. This fall, on October 25, several Mgrublian Center student assistants visited the LA exhibition to bear witness to the atrocities that occurred at the Nova Music Festival. By the end of their visit, they were equally moved and horribly disturbed by what they had seen and experienced.

The Day That Shattered a Celebration

The Nova Music Festival was meant to be a celebration of music, freedom, and the global spirit of peace. Thousands of young people from Israel and around the world gathered under the stars, drawn to the desert for an all-night rave. But as the music played, the crowd danced, and the sun rose, their sense of safety was shattered.

The exhibition opens with a short film detailing the hours leading up to 06:29 a.m. on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched its attack against Israel. Video footage of survivors and victims of the attack shows thousands of young people dancing, laughing, and enjoying themselves from sunset to sunrise, unaware of what was to come. Many of those interviewed in the film emphasize the central focus of the Nova Music Festival, which was to connect with the Earth, humanity, and peace. One partygoer stated, “The festival, which had been a symbol of joy and unity, became a chilling spectacle of terror, instantly sealing its dark place in history.” With this, the exhibition’s opening film ends, and two large doors open into a smokey hallway.



Anxiety, Fear, and Panic

Stepping into that hallway filled with the sound of gunshots, the screams of innocent victims, and gruesome images of the murdered and wounded, one cannot help but feel a small fraction of the fear that the partygoers experienced that day. Videos of the abductions of several hostages play on screens throughout the hallway—the look of panic palpable in their pleading eyes. Other screens display images and videos of concert attendees running for their lives through the desert as terrorists gun them down. Women, men, children, and the elderly are shown hiding in the sparse brush of the desert, in trash cans, porta potties, and under already dead bodies. All around them, Hamas terrorists shout “God is greatest” as they pull the triggers on their guns. One screen shows a WhatsApp phone call between a terrorist and his father, in which he excitedly exclaims, “Dad, I’m calling you from a phone of a Jew. I just killed her and her husband. Dad, I killed 10 with my hands. Look how many I killed with my hands. With my own hands I killed 10!”

Remembering The Fallen

The hallway ends, and with it the traumatic sounds of the attack, opening up onto a huge room filled with artifacts representing the aftermath of the massacre. Belongings that were left behind, burnt cars, porta potties riddled with bullet holes, and a reconstruction of the bar and stage from the festival fill the space. Small screens around the room display different survivors and rescuers recounting what they experienced.

In a small enclave, there is a space of mourning for those who were murdered and taken hostage from the Nova Festival. Photographs of each person and a small description of who they were and what they loved fill the space of three walls. In the center, thousands of notes of prayer from visitors lie facing their images.

The sights I saw there will be engraved in my mind till the end of time. It's not every day that you see young people tied to trees. Naked girls with their legs spreadeagled. And I'm cutting them down and covering them. I cover these wonderful girls and say Sh'ma Yisrael for all of them.

-Rami Davidian, a civilian who led a rescue effort that saved hundreds of festival-goers.



Mgrublian Center Student Assistants Reflect

At the Nova Exhibit, I found myself taken aback by how unapologetically real it was. The feelings I felt were raw, I found myself not being able to breathe at some points and not being able to move. When I was going through the possessions that were found on the grounds, I saw the same pair of shoes I was wearing that day, which made me realize that this could have easily been me as it was them. - Gabriel Gardner '28

As someone who lost a relative on October 7 (not at Nova, but still someone who was murdered by Hamas) it reminded me of every emotion and the sadness I felt that day. I think everyone needs to go to this exhibit and see what truly happened and what Hamas did on October 7 and what they want to continue to do. - Rachel Svoyskiy '26

Having visited the site of the Nova Festival this past summer in Israel, this exhibition put a face to the violence that can no longer be seen on site, only felt in the air. My friend was taken hostage to Gaza on October 7, and seeing the video of her abduction at the exhibition broke something in me. My friends who are soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces led rescue efforts at the site of the festival, and despite all that I saw, I cannot imagine the horrors that they witnessed. Experiencing the sounds, smells, and sights of that horrible day was beyond painful, but it also gave me hope. Hope that those who choose to bear witness to these atrocities will not allow them to happen again. Hope that young Israelis will continue dancing. And most of all, hope that just like those at Nova believed, we will one day live in a more peaceful world.

-Annie Bernstein '27

RACE, RELIGION, GENDER 2024 ELECTION CONFERENCE

During the fall semester, anticipation of the 2024 Presidential Election created a strong pulse of collaborative energy for students, faculty, research institutions, and clubs. Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum events, debate watch parties, “Get Out The Vote” events, voter registration drives, and civic education “carnivals” all incentivized voter turnout. The possible outcome of the election was closely watched by every person on campus. The sentiment overall, was that no matter your demographic, hometown, beliefs, or even apathy, this election was an important event that would affect our community and world.

The recent Conference on Race, Religion and Gender in the 2024 Presidential Election was hosted on October 31st, 2024 with a panel of scholars from all over the nation who are experts in different voting groups. The event was sponsored by the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies, The Salvatori Center for Individual Freedom in the Modern World, the Rose Institute of State and Local Government, The Kravis Lab for Civic Leadership, and the Department of Religious Studies.

Dr. Gastón Espinosa’s pre and post-election conferences and symposium at the Athenaeum brought nuance to election discussions. An Arthur V. Stoughton Professor of Religious Studies and Co-Editor of The Columbia University Press Series in Religion and Politics, Dr. Espinosa has written or edited a number of books and articles on the influence of religious beliefs on voter behavior, especially focusing on Latino voters in the US.

Georgia Alford ‘28, interviewed the conference director, CMC Professor Gaston Espinosa - the conference being a continuation of his book publication, *Religion in the American Presidency: George Washington to George W. Bush* (May 2009). He is also currently collaborating with scholars to work on a new book, *Religion, Race, Gender and the 2024 Election* (August 2025). A dozen scholars will write ten chapters on each segment of the American electorate.

By Georgia Alford ‘28



Professor Gaston Espinosa (left) moderates a panel during the conference in the CMC Athenaeum

The Conference focused on ten segments of the American electorate: Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Muslims, Jews, Seculars, Women, Latinos, Asians, and Blacks. The conference explored the critical roles that religion, race, and gender will play in shaping the final outcome of the 2024 election nationwide and in key swing states.

Each scholar gave an overview of the trends of each segment from 2000-2020. During the lunchtime panel discussion, the scholars expanded on what they believed are Harris’s and Trump’s campaign assets and liabilities. Pre-Election, many scholars suggested the possibility of a Trump victory.

The idea of religion as a guiding factor of voter choices was a key perspective of the conference. The emphasis on the importance of each segment of the electorate’s power to shift the results was evident through the data and surveys presented. Within each religious group, there is massive diversity of race, age, gender and socioeconomic status. Even with these factors, religion often is the trump card in close elections in key swing states where religious voters have greater influence on the outcome. Religion can be a greater determinant of voting behavior bringing attention to what moral position religion informs voters, especially on issues of human rights within politics.

RACE, RELIGION, GENDER

2024 ELECTION CONFERENCE

Post-Election, there was a follow-up lunch panel to discuss the statistics of the election, and how each segment voted. Earth-shattering findings included the increase in Latino support for Trump, at 46%, the most any modern president has garnered. He also won 39% of the Asian American vote. Harris performed better with the Jewish vote, but more orthodox Jews voted for Trump. The Evangelical vote for Trump was a little higher than in 2020. However, historically-speaking, most minorities who are Evangelical are democrat. The Catholic vote for Trump was high in swing states.

According to Espinosa, this conference was an opportunity for “scholars to share their expertise... there is a lack of work being done on the intersection of religion, race and gender in the presidency and this book will be the first place where you can see all ten groups in one place”. The choice for the conference to be in the CMC Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum was intentional on Espinosa’s part, saying, “CMC’s mission is to prepare students for careers in government and the professions, but it also seeks to help shape responsible leadership.

When prompted on the importance of bringing attention to demographic groups that include religion, it is because racial minorities in the US population are growing, and they are disproportionately religious, more religious than the majority white population. Women are usually more religious than men (though Espinosa noted that this is changing), and also vote at higher rates than men.

“Religion matters”, Espinosa says, “especially when candidates are equally matched or voters are looking for other factors to help inform their decision”.

“Human rights was an issue in this election. Americans consider them”, Espinosa affirmed. Border issues and war were inevitably on the consciousness of many voters, and the issue of the economy and border were at the precipice.

Voter’s opinions on some of these issues are often shaped by their religious identity.

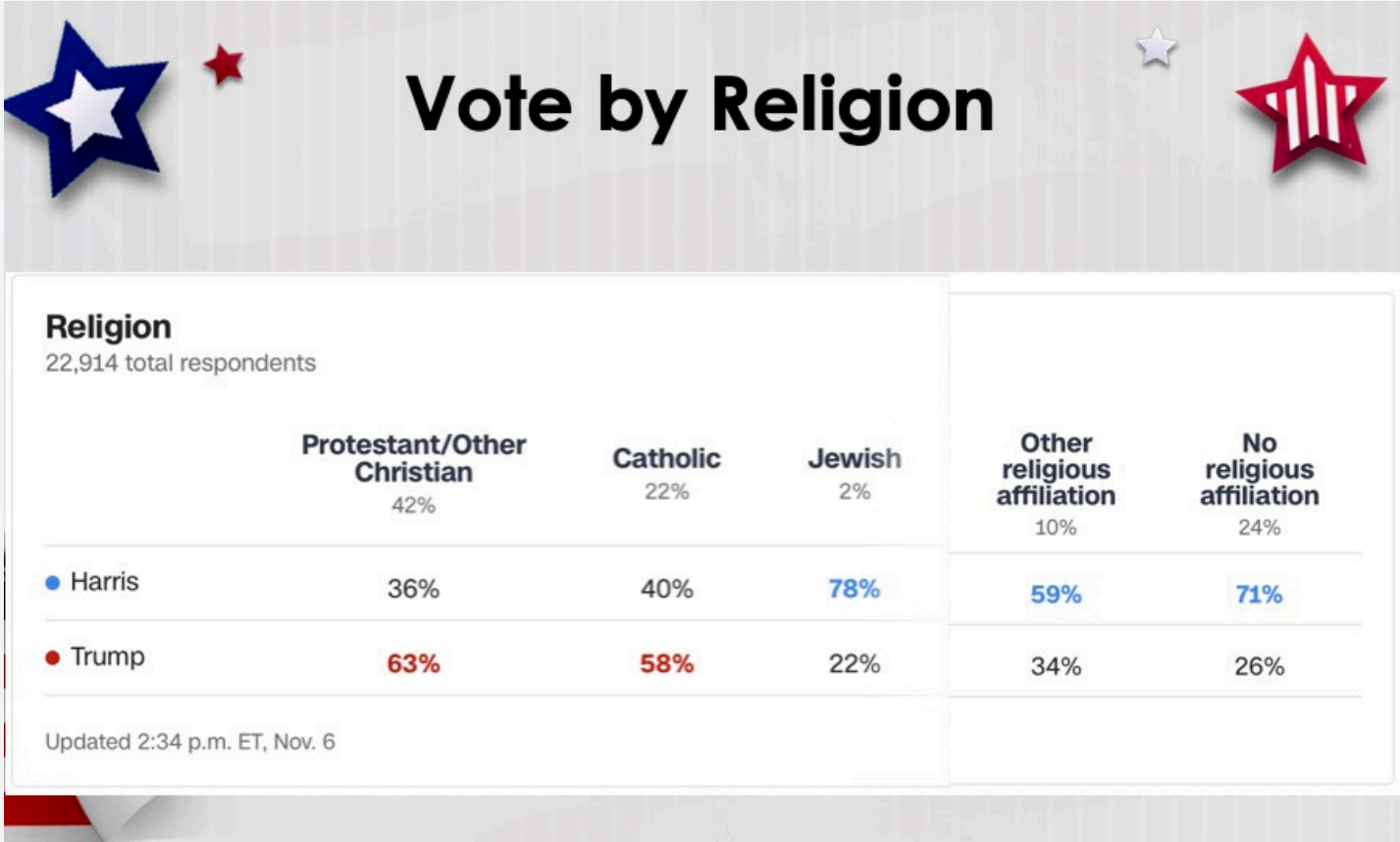
These ideas were discussed in the Post-Election symposium at the Athenaeum. When Muslim voting behavior was analyzed, many abstained from voting or voted for the Green party, and some moved to support Trump because he said he would bring the war in Gaza to an end. Black men voted for Trump in higher numbers, though the overall Black vote for Harris and Trump followed patterns seen in previous elections. The Jewish vote remained strong with Harris.

“The pendulum swings in America”, said Dr. Espinosa with a sense of calm different from the sentiment of panic that has been felt in many parts of the country since November 7th. Understanding the results of the election that have caused many people to feel misrepresented is important.

We are reminded by Dr. Espinosa to “Promote civil discourse, value friendship over political commitments, and as always, parties and commitments can change”.

“We must work to create a strong community for everyone”.

Highlighting new scholarship in the intersection of Race, Religion, Gender and the 2024 Presidential Election brings attention to the complexity of voting behavior, especially considering the diverse religious belief systems that exist in our country.



John K. Roth: How Shall I Teach the Holocaust *This Time*?



Photos courtesy of Claremont McKenna College

November 13, 2024 - CMC Athenaeum

A Reflection by Catalina de la Peña '27

On the evening of November 13th, John K. Roth— professor at CMC and founder of the Mgrublian center for human rights— gave the keynote lecture during the Athenaeum dinner program. Working at CMC for 40 years and retiring in 2006, Roth has stayed actively involved at CMC. Following his talk, President Chodosh presented him with the Donald C. McKenna Humanitarian Award which is reserved for “exemplary interest in education, the improvement of circumstances for peoples of the world, achievement in the humanities, business or the professions, and contributions that have been of significant importance to the College”.

For over half a century, Professor Roth has dedicated his career to studying the Holocaust, and has written more than 50 books and taught numerous courses on the subject. In his Athenaeum talk “How Shall I Teach the Holocaust *This Time*,” Roth explored the ways that the teaching of the Holocaust has transformed overtime, and why this subject has more relevance in today’s world. His central argument is that two important dates have changed the teaching of the Holocaust: November 5th, 2024 (the day Trump was elected president) and October 7, 2023 (the day Hamas kidnapped and murdered hundreds of Israelis).

Roth explains how Trump's reelection poses a threat to American democracy, drawing parallels between the rise of Nazi Germany and the current political climate of the United States. He highlights the shared reliance on misinformation in the rise of political leaders. In Hitler’s rise to power, he and his regime relied heavily on spreading false information, particularly the idea that the Jewish community was to be blamed for the war and the great depression.

With two-thirds of the population believing the United States is heading in the wrong direction, he warns us that America is facing similar challenges, and that the failure to uphold truth jeopardizes democracy. He believes that Trump's rise to power is a threat to our democracy as “a failure in defending truth causes democracy to die.” This means, we have to rely on facts seriously: “facts may be stubborn, but democracy relies on our fidelity to them.” In this context, his answer to how he should teach the Holocaust is that it should serve as a cautionary tale, encouraging people to defend our democracy.

Additionally, October 7, 2023, the day Hamas kidnapped and killed Israeli citizens, changed Holocaust education. Following the attack, the Israel-Gaza tension escalated into a full-scale war. This attack raised significant global debates about the language used to describe the conflict, with some comparing the kidnapping to the Holocaust and others accusing Israel of committing a genocide. The intensifying war and Israel's actions towards Gaza and Palestine has led to an increase in empathy for Palestinians, an increase in criticism towards Israel, and an increase in Anti-Semitism.

Roth explains how since this event, it has been harder to teach about the Holocaust, and believes that Holocaust education must adapt in certain ways. First, no teaching of the Holocaust will be able to avoid the Israel-Palestine conflict. Second, the teaching should be based on the instructor’s identity, and in Roth’s case, he identifies as a “pro-Palestinian Zionist.” This means that while he believes Israel should put an end to their violation and help rebuild Palestine, he also supports Israel having the self-determination to keep their state. His idea of the best approach is to have a two-state solution achieved to help mitigate this tension.

During his concluding remarks, Roth reminds us: "Always remember and act on a key Holocaust-related insight-the most important of all: **take nothing good for granted**. The older I become, the more that last imperative grips me...I need to remember more and more, to take nothing good for granted and to teach and act accordingly."

Roth’s lecture boasted a dining room full to capacity with students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members and was held on the eve of the Lessons and Legacies conference which began the next morning on CMC’s campus and is sponsored by the Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University and co-hosted by the Mgrublian Center at CMC and by USC. A full transcript of Professor Roth’s remarks and of the award presented by President Chodosh can be found on the Center’s website, www.cmc.edu/human-rights.



President Hiram Chodosh presenting the Donald C. McKenna Humanitarian award to John Roth; photo courtesy of Claremont McKenna College.

The Watchtower Podcast episode, “Revisiting the Holocaust with A Modern Lens with Professor John Roth,” published on International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27, 2025). Scan code at right to listen.



Left to right: Catalina de la Peña ‘27, John Roth, Ambika Gupta ‘27



Lessons and Legacies Conference 2024

From November 14–17th, CMC and the Mgrublian Center proudly hosted the Seventeenth Biennial Lessons and Legacies Conference, a prestigious event co-sponsored by the Holocaust Educational Foundation (HEF) of Northwestern University and the University of Southern California's Dornsife Center for Advanced Genocide Research. This conference, dedicated to the study of the Holocaust, its history, representation, and memory, brought together 230 scholars from diverse fields, cultural backgrounds, and methodological approaches for interdisciplinary collaboration and intellectual exchange.



Welcome remarks by Center Director Wendy Lower and CMC History Professor Jonathan Petropoulos.

This year's conference centered on the theme "Languages of the Holocaust," inviting participants to explore the multifaceted ways language shaped, documented, and responded to Holocaust experiences. The keynote speaker, Sara Horowitz, a renowned scholar in Holocaust history and literature, delivered a profound address highlighting the critical role of language in understanding the Holocaust. Her reflections emphasized the importance of examining the Holocaust through varied disciplinary perspectives to uncover new layers of meaning and representation.



Conference plenary session.

The theme was further explored through thirty-one educational panels that examined not only the languages spoken and written during and after the Holocaust but also the diverse ways it has been represented in literary works, visual arts, film, and oral histories. These discussions illuminated the multifaceted nature of language as a tool for documenting and understanding historical atrocities.

Central to the conference were probing questions about the role of linguistic strategies — and even strategic silences — in the expansion of Nazi ideology and the perpetration of the Holocaust. Scholars from over twenty-four countries shared their expertise, analyzing these issues through cultural, social, and political lenses. The event underscored the pervasive influence of language and the importance of interdisciplinary efforts to uncover its impact and legacy. Hosted for the third time here at CMC, the Lessons and Legacies Conference continues to be a cornerstone event for Holocaust scholarship, fostering a deeper collective understanding of this pivotal chapter in human history.

LESSONS & LEGACIES KEYNOTE: SARA HOROWITZ



*Sara Horowitz delivering the keynote lecture
on opening night of the conference*

Sara Horowitz, the Keynote Speaker for the Lessons and Legacies conference, is a distinguished scholar and academic leader, serving as a Professor of Humanities, Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, as well as the Director of the Center for Jewish Studies at York University in Canada. Her academic journey reflects a deep and multifaceted engagement with literature and cultural studies. She earned her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and holds advanced degrees in French and English literature—a Master of Arts from Brandeis University and Columbia University, respectively—including a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the City College of the City University of New York.

Her scholarly contributions extend to Holocaust studies, with a particular focus on the intersections of gender, memory, and genocide. As a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, she conducted groundbreaking research on the topic “Gender, Genocide, and Jewish Memory: Culture, Memory, and the Holocaust.” This work explores how gender dynamics shape and are shaped by the cultural remembrance of the Holocaust.

In her keynote lecture, Horowitz delved into these themes, emphasizing the profound significance of personal, human-to-human encounters in shaping our understanding of these historical memories. She argued that such close, intimate interactions not only illuminate the lived experiences of those who endured the Holocaust but also profoundly influence how subsequent generations grapple with and internalize these memories.



Conference photos courtesy of Claremont McKenna College

PROFESSOR RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT: MICHAEL FORTNER: DRUGS AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

By Gabriel Gardner '28



Dr. Michael Fortner

The United States' relationship with illicit drugs is deeply intertwined with its culture, history, and policies. Dr. Michael Fortner, Associate Professor of Government and George R. Roberts Fellow, delved into these complexities through his lab, *Drugs and the American Experience*, hosted by the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies. Drawing from his own experiences and extensive research, Dr. Fortner's lab invited scholars to examine the cultural, historical, and ethical dimensions of drug use and policy in the United States.

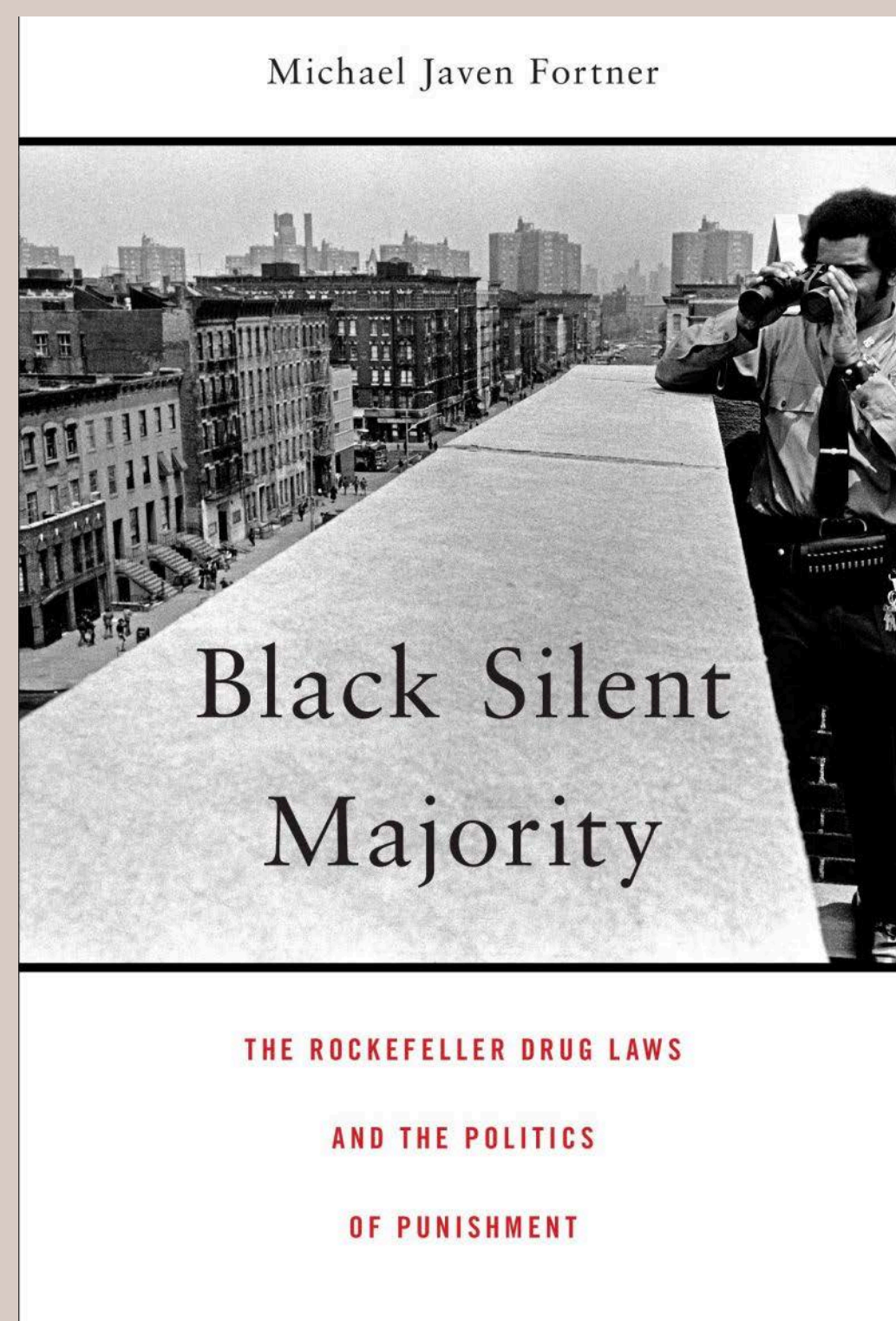
Dr. Fortner joined the CMC Government department in 2021, where he has also taught "Intro to American Politics" and "Race and Politics". His research focuses on the intersection of race, class, and public policy, particularly how policies exacerbate pre-existing social inequalities. His first book, which explored the rise and effects of New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws, laid out the groundwork for this lab, showcasing the profound social impacts of legislative decisions. "This lab is a direct offshoot of that research agenda," Dr. Fortner explains, "It seeks to understand addiction, how people experience it, and whether their lived experiences provide insight into policy responses." By drawing on personal narratives and historical records, the lab connects the human impact of drug use and addiction with the broader structural forces that shape policy-making. This multi-faceted approach highlights the enduring tension between individual agency and systemic control within the context of drug policy.

Raised in Brooklyn during the "Crack Epidemic," Dr. Fortner witnessed firsthand the dual realities of widespread drug use and policing. These experiences profoundly shaped his academic trajectory, "I saw a lot of drug use and policing of drug users, and as I developed as a scholar, I returned to those early moments to understand the patterns of drug usage and the government's response."

In this lab, students are immersed in a multidisciplinary exploration of the U.S.'s histories and complicated relationship with illegal narcotics. Research Assistants analyze depictions of drugs in film, music, and media, all while delving into memoirs, oral histories, and government documents. Dr. Fortner's methodology emphasizes rigorous archival research, and to not just focus on the actions of White policymakers, but also on how communities of color have experienced and responded to drug use and enforcement.

A significant aim of the lab is to equip students with the skills to think critically and synthesize diverse sources. Students analyze traditional histories, oral narratives, and legal documents, gaining a nuanced understanding of the drug war's societal impact. "I want students to learn how to read across different types of sources and integrate them into a cohesive research project," Dr. Fortner notes.

Beyond historical analysis, the lab tackles critical ethical questions surrounding drug policy: What is the role of bodily autonomy? How do policies balance public safety with personal freedoms? By engaging with these questions, students grapple with the broader implications of governmental approaches to addiction and enforcement. This inquiry invites students to reflect on the moral complexities of legislation that simultaneously seeks to protect communities while often marginalizing the most vulnerable. Through rigorous debate and analysis, participants explore how policies can perpetuate inequality and consider alternative frameworks that prioritize equity and humanity. In doing so, the lab fosters a deeper understanding of the ethical stakes embedded in public health and criminal justice systems.



*Dr. Fortner's first book
(Harvard University Press, 2015)*

A CONVERSATION WITH PROFESSOR LISA KOCH: NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION'S HUMAN IMPLICATIONS



Interview by Ilma Turcios '25

Associate Professor at CMC, Lisa Koch specializes in international relations, American foreign policy, security studies, and nuclear policy. Her academic contributions provide a comprehensive approach to some of the most significant issues facing the international system today.

An award winning professor and author, Koch was awarded the 2023 Glenn R. Huntoon Award for Superior Teaching, and the Robert Jervis Best International Security Book Award for her book, *Nuclear Decisions: Changing the Course of Nuclear Weapons Programs* (Oxford University Press 2023). Her publications span topics of nuclear proliferation, restraint, and other themes of foreign policy, and she has brought extensive perspectives on the topic to CMC's own Ath.

I had the pleasure of serving as Professor Koch's research assistant in the Fall of 2023. I was able to interact with survey data she collected in the US, UK, India, and Pakistan on public perceptions of the use of different types of nuclear weapons, which sparked a question on my end: What are the human implications and our understanding of where human rights fit into conversations about nuclear policy and proliferation?

I had the opportunity to interview Professor Koch and gain some insight on her current research work and overall significant issues concerning human rights in the study of nuclear policy and security.

Q: Can you explain a bit about your research?

A: My research contributes to timely debates on the proliferation and potential use of nuclear weapons. From Russia's recent nuclear threats, to Iran's progress toward a nuclear weapons capability, to the uncertainty surrounding China's and North Korea's nuclear plans; nuclear weapons affect our world. My research on nuclear weapons in international security and politics investigates policy-relevant questions in two main areas. First, I investigate the process and politics of nuclear proliferation. What slows the spread of nuclear weapons, and why do states take such different paths to and away from nuclear weapons? Second, I investigate public attitudes toward nuclear weapons. What do citizens think about nuclear weapons use, and why?

Q: How do you see nuclear proliferation and policy as a human rights issue?

A: Nuclear weapons have a profound effect on humans. Not only the use of nuclear weapons, which today would threaten life on earth as we know it, but also the development and testing of nuclear weapons—as I know you know from your own research!—are harmful to humans. Most often, the people and communities in harm's way are those who have little political power. Because nuclear weapons pose a threat to humanity, for decades, people around the world have created social movements in opposition to nuclear weapons development and use. Vincent Intondi is a scholar who has written two recent, good books on anti-nuclear social movements, in case anyone is interested in learning more.

Q: How would you frame the connection between proliferation/disarmament and international cooperation and security?

*A: The history of international conflict and cooperation surrounding nuclear proliferation and disarmament is fascinating, and dates back to the start of the nuclear age. Countries have pursued nuclear cooperation when those in government have believed that cooperation would be in their best interests. Sometimes, a country will make a 180 degree turn from conflict to cooperation without offering any explanation, as the Soviet Union did in 1963. Anyone interested in understanding more about periods of nuclear cooperation and conflict could take a look at Chapter 4 of my book, *Nuclear Decisions*, for a brief history.*

Q: What types of frameworks do you think should be adopted in the international community when discussing nuclear policy in adequate ways that account for its implications beyond a policy sense?

A: I think the nonproliferation and disarmament activists who led the movement to create a nuclear weapons ban treaty in the 2010s offer one model for such a framework. They chose to frame nuclear policy in humanitarian terms: they centered the human experience, and the dignity and preciousness of human life, arguing that nuclear weapons place humanity at risk. While the nuclear ban treaty specifically is not an enforceable law (it outlaws nuclear weapons), I think humanitarian framing is worthwhile in nuclear policy discussions broadly, because nuclear weapons are truly a global issue; their effects transcend borders.

Q: What issues do you see as the most significant when thinking of proliferation in today's context?

A: I think nuclear threats, particularly those issued by Russia in the context of the Russian war in Ukraine, are one highly significant issue. The nuclear threat dynamics of the Pakistan-India rivalry (both those countries have nuclear weapons) are also a serious concern. I think policy changes over the last several years in several different countries, including the United States, to prioritize lower-yield nuclear weapons (whether those are tactical/battlefield nuclear weapons or small city-destroying nuclear weapons) could potentially change strategic thinking related to the possible use of nuclear weapons in conflict. Iran is close to being able to produce nuclear weapons but has never made the political decision to do so; that could change. China is adding to its nuclear arsenal; while China's arsenal is far smaller than those of the US and Russia, its investment in its arsenal raises questions and concerns about its intentions and future plans.

VISITING PROFESSOR RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT: ISIDRO GONZÁLES



Interview by Georgia Alford '28

Isidro González joins the History Department as a Pre-Doctoral Fellow of History and Visiting Instructor of History. González's research explores histories and legacies of eugenic practices, methods, and data in the 20th-century U.S. Southwest. Specifically, he looks at the roles of social workers, science, and the state in race-making through disability, disabled subjects, and disability experts at sites of confinement and exclusion, such as institutions for people deemed "feebleminded" and the Mexico-U.S. border. One of his current projects delves into the history of behavioral interventions and how racialized subjects experienced them in the post-World War II era. In support of his dissertation, he received the Andrew Vincent White and Florence Wales White Scholarship in the Medical Humanities from the University of California Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI) for a project that showed how intimate dialogue between observer and observed demonstrated ways in which bedside manner, cultural insensitivity, and an ideology that some bodyminds are worth more than others led to long lives of confinement, surveillance, and sexual sterilization for patients/inmates or, for eugenic professionals, to successful, generative, and long careers in the sciences. González's work has appeared in *Southern California Quarterly* and *Sage Research Methods: Diversifying and Decolonizing Research*.

Born in Tijuana, González moved at a young age to the San Diego area. He attended San Diego State University and then continued with his master's and PhD at the University of California-Santa Barbara. He completed his dissertation this semester while teaching a course on the History of Latinx Migrations. The question of his dissertation was "how do you make a disabled person, how was this constructed throughout history?" His dissertation also analyzed primary sources of cases from eugenic fieldworkers in California, a sociomedical work that was the process of observation of everyday lives of people to pathologize individuals, families, homes, and the environment.

The thread that has connected Professor Isidro González's experiences throughout his academic career has been his deep personal understanding of individual stories of migration, disability, and Mexican Identity. "I am a borderlander, if you will" González tells me during our interview, "I've always just kind of been interested in that aspect of places around the world, like where we have two cultures sort of meshing for better or for worse, good and bad", he said.

What this concept borderlander means for González changed during his studies of Mexican history and nation building in combination with the history of Eugenics in California specifically. His concept of history combines science, medicine, politics, culture, society on the understanding of disability, "I ended up writing a history on that on what the eugenic movement really meant in the US West and how concepts of race of ethnicity, of religion [influenced it]", He said "political affiliations how that played into pathologize somebody under the lens of eugenic thinking."

At CMC, González has enjoyed the small class sizes, connection between students, and the structure of the semester system where he felt like he was able to expand on his course and engage the students with the content to a deeper level. This semester he taught History of Latinx Migrations, next semester he will be teaching a class on the History of Medicine in the United States, more focused on his specialty in Eugenics and disability. “I would say that CMC really did give me time to teach about something that I'm passionate about” he says.

But González most certainly brought deep passion for both his field of study but firstly, his students. He is aiming to create a more accessible environment in his classes to people with all types of disabilities. Providing a variety of medias, different avenues for submitting assignments and always offering one-on-one time with students. In his research, he aims to write using more accessible language, rather than the “abstract and jargon filled” academic language he used in his graduate studies.

When asked about his connection to human rights in his career, González had important contributions to make, “Human mobility in general and crossing political boundaries is often violent, but important to history, to understand why we are here and why people move in the first place”. The violence is often perpetrated by the biggest powers.

González speaks on the human rights issues intertwined with disability. “Disability is this connective tissue across races, ethnicities, class, political inclination, everything” he says. “I feel it doesn't get much attention because it's usually seen as something not to be, something to avoid or even to consider that it's not a life is not worth living because of disability”. Disabled individuals are often target more by sexual abuse and state violence, “[connecting] those understandings of historically what it means to be disabled to the present and being able to see who we are”, said González. Bringing disability and migration under the umbrella of human rights is a part of González's study of history.

Isidro González, a Doctor of History, professor, and self-proclaimed “storyteller” hopes to continue his research in the second half of the 20th century looking at oral history to expand on how racialized subjects experience the process of pathologization and behavioral interventions. The broader idea of the project will continue to examine the legacies of eugenics and how they are still utilized, sometimes unknowingly. His passion for and depth in his field of History is inherently connected to current issues around human rights, migration, borders and disability. In Spring 2025, he will continue his teaching and will also deliver an Athenaeum lunch presentation sponsored by the Mgrublian Center and the CMC History Department.

HIGHLIGHTING BOARD MEMBER VOICES:

ELIZABETH MATTHIAS '81



Interview by Catalina de la Peña '27

Elizabeth Matthias (Liz), a 1981 CMC (then Claremont Men's College) alumna, joined the Mgrublian Center Advisory Board in 2016. Majoring in Political Philosophy at CMC and attending UCLA law school, she brings a unique perspective to the board. Her career has included volunteer work, nonprofit boards, and serving in the Edison Law department, including a role in the Disabilities Rights Legal Committee board. Her involvement with the Mgrublian Center initially started from Professor Emeritus John K. Roth, whose teachings have left a lasting impression on her to this day. After retiring, Liz began researching the Center and connecting with the team, ultimately being invited to join the advisory board.

What interested you most about connecting with the Mgrublian Center as a board member?

The opportunity to connect with the Mgrublian Center as a board member was deeply appealing because of Professor John K. Roth and his vision. Graduating in 1981, she had the pleasure of having Dr. Roth as a professor. His emphasis on internships and building an institution that focuses on human rights, rather than business-oriented, stood out to Liz, as she thought it could provide students with an opportunity to engage with human rights issues. "This can allow students to be cognizant of the rights and needs of others, while also paving the way for a career in law."

Are there particular human rights issues that resonate deeply with you, and if they have shaped your work, how have these interests influenced what you've been involved in over the years?

Liz shared that there are two issues that have resonated with her deeply. The first is immigration. Growing up in Arizona and majoring in Spanish, she has been exposed to a personal perspective on the challenges immigrants face. When she was active in the Beverly Hills bar association, she worked on immigration cases which gave her insights into the legal and personal struggles faced by immigrants seeking a better life. This work only reinforced her belief in the importance of fair treatment for individuals navigating the immigration system. The second issue is women's educational rights, a cause she feels deeply connected to despite not having extensive work related to it. When reflecting on her experience, she explains, "seeing the contrast between my opportunities as a woman in the United States, and the challenges women face in other countries has reinforced my gratitude and commitment to this cause. This came to the forefront after seeing what's going on in Afghanistan, as I know how lucky I am to have been a female in the United States at this point in history. My opportunities have given me the life that I have, but it's difficult to see how other women are denied the same chances I was given"

In your view, what should be the Center's top priorities over the next five years?

Liz believes that the Center should focus on providing opportunities for students, through internships, research, and international experiences. She also believes that bringing in scholars to speak about human rights is a great way to involve students. "I want to make sure opportunities for internships will strengthen. To me, it's all about helping the students, and that's what this Center is about." Her goal is to expand connections with legal boards and pro bono organizations, creating opportunities for students to engage with and explore legal studies. She's also particularly passionate about expanding programs that allow students to provide research while traveling, as it can easily broaden perspectives and help foster a deeper engagement with human rights issues.

How can CMC students and faculty better leverage the resources of the Center to address pressing human rights issues?

Liz responded that the best way to leverage the resources is to actively get involved—apply for internships, attend speaker events, and engage with visiting scholars. She is proud of the different speakers and scholars the center has hosted and thinks it's a great way to allow students to get involved. Her advice for students is simple: "go to the Atheneum lunches, dinners, and the talks. These are opportunities to learn about things we should all care about. You don't need to be a superstar—just show up and stay curious."

HIGHLIGHTING BOARD MEMBER VOICES: MARK PALMER '88



Interview by Michelle Lee '28

What interested you most about connecting with the Mgrublian Center as a board member?

“The first thing is building meaning in life and purpose. I wanted to find ways to get involved that are meaningful, and the center provides a great opportunity for that. A lot of it is also the relationships I really value. There's no denying that having an ongoing relationship with the founder, John Roth, who's been a mentor for me, is wonderful. Additionally, the other board members—those who have been on, those who have left, and the new ones—are all wonderful and inspiring. What they do in their careers and outside their professional lives is extremely gratifying, and I find it rewarding to spend time with them.”

Are there particular human rights issues that resonate deeply with you, and if they have shaped your work, how have these interests influenced what you've been involved in over the years?

“Right after I joined the center, many people were coming to the US from Central America to escape terrible conditions. At the time, it seemed more attorneys were needed, especially those who spoke Spanish. My law degree and ability to speak Spanish were useful, so I thought, here's a way to get involved. I ended up becoming somewhat of an expert, particularly in women's issues—helping clients escape forced prostitution, domestic violence, and, in one case, persecution for being a lesbian. These are the types of clients I've worked with the most. I even brought in CMC students to help with some of these cases and secure asylum for clients. It was a nice full-circle moment, giving students the opportunity to gain experience while helping me take on a heavier caseload.”

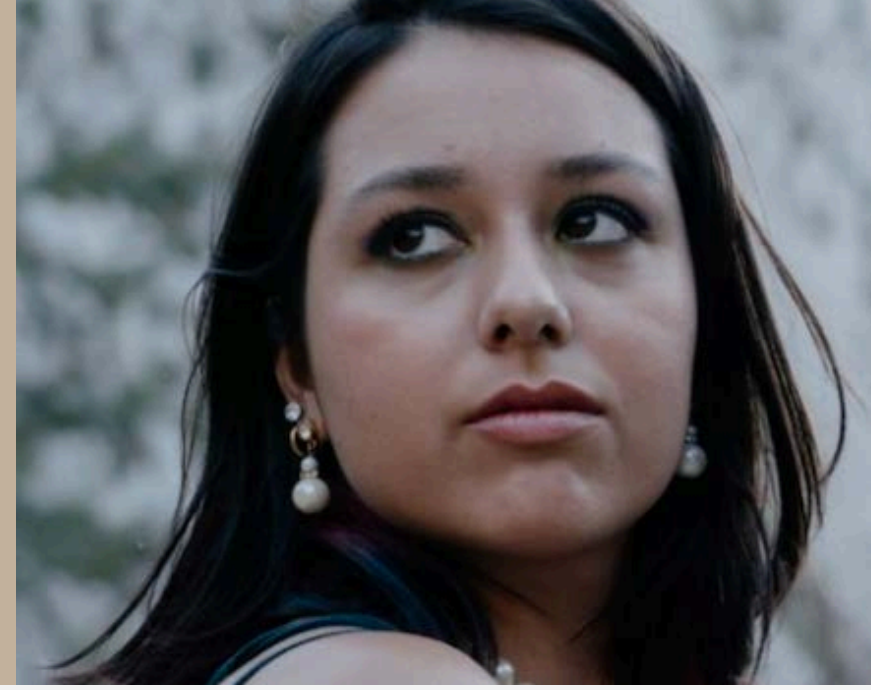
What advice would you give to students aspiring to work in human rights advocacy or related fields?

“The first thing I'd say is that if you want to work on human rights issues, you don't have to go into the field full-time. There are many opportunities to contribute avocationally—it's not all or nothing. For most of us, it likely won't be our primary focus. I'd also say, start early. Don't let excuses hold you back. It's easy to think you don't have time, but you do—you just need to protect it, often going against the current of what friends and peers are doing. I waited too long, and I didn't need to. Another challenge is the lack of an economic engine to support this path. Big law firms or consulting firms will show up on campus to recruit—they make it easy. Nonprofits, on the other hand, don't have the resources to do that. If you want to work in this field, you have to reach out, start networking, and do it early and often.”

Are there any specific books, events, or people that have shaped your perspective on human rights?

“One event that affected me deeply is the broader acknowledgment of the Tulsa Massacre. It was buried in history and previously called the Texas Riot, which framed it differently. The term 'riot' shifts blame, while 'massacre' places responsibility elsewhere. Tulsa was the Black Wall Street, a thriving Black community, until it was destroyed—wiped out not only physically but also erased from history. This made me realize that the idea that U.S. issues are smaller than global ones might always have been a myth. These problems existed but were buried in American mythology. It makes me wonder what other events I wasn't taught about in school or history books.”

Class of '24 Highlight: DANA VILLASENOR



By Shiv Parihar '28

Following graduation, Dana Villaseñor '24, received funding for six months of work with the non-profit Edu-Futuro, organized via the federal organization AmeriCorps.

Born in Mexico, Dana moved to the United States at 14 and eventually settled in Rancho Cucamonga before getting into CMC, a place she described as able to balance acceptance and strong discussions, through the QuestBridge regular decision process. At CMC, Dana was involved in rugby and received a creative works fellowship from the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies. She used this fellowship to author a children's book and produce the podcast Captive Audience along with Margo Cohen '25, interviewing inmates seeking to start a new life. Further, she served as a research assistant for Professor Peter Uvin's international development research on transition towns and interned for the Alaska ACLU. Her position with the ACLU was a particularly difficult one, leading her to recount "if you become numb, you can't do your job correctly. If you don't become numb, you become drained."

As she approached graduation, the Mgrublian Center helped Dana access the human rights sector through a financial award aimed at supporting her work in this field. This guarantee allowed her to balance the stress of her thesis and job applications. Dana found a position through the federal agency AmeriCorps at Edu-Futuro, a curriculum developer aimed at students from middle school upwards. Edu-Futuro caters to immigrants, many of whom work hard but lack knowledge about engines of social mobility such as college. The organization offers beginner robotics classes for middle schoolers along with early emerging leaders programs teaching emotional and social skills. For high schoolers, an emerging leaders program focusing on pre-professional skills and pathways to education is offered at two levels. The group partners with schools and families to decrease truancy through individual communication and teaches parents to become involved in educational institutions.

For those older, Edu-Futuro offers development programs to help adults progress to a higher paying job with skills such as Microsoft Office or resume building. Dana recommends AmeriCorps, which pairs workers to non-profits, for those in transitional periods in their lives such as being right out of college. To Dana, AmeriCorps gives someone unsure about their post-graduation path a trial by fire in life, "after one year, I can say that I've learned a lot of things." In general, Dana advises "everyone that can afford it to do one year of working with the targeted population that you want to work with in the future....Do one year of seeing the people break your heart a little bit...a reminder of the consequences of your actions when you get higher up...you should, at the beginning of your career, break your heart a little bit." Further, she urges students to take advantage of resources available, noting that "I would not have been able to take this without the Mgrublian Center's support".

A LOOK AT HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOMALILAND

By Shiv Parihar '28

A recent report suggested that the Trump Administration may recognize the small East African nation of Somaliland; what might this mean for human rights? The Republic of Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 amidst the nation's disintegration into a human rights crisis that has persisted to this day. Comprising the Somali territory formerly held as a British rather than an Italian colony, the nascent Republic avoided the worst of the chaos. In over three decades of independence unrecognized on the international stage, Somaliland has gained recognition as a haven of democratic practices such as free and fair elections and respect for human rights in East Africa. A 2003 protest movement brought democratic reforms and eventually led longtime President Dahir Riyale Kahin to peacefully transferring power to the opposition following the 2010 elections. However, President Muse Bihi Abdi of the ruling Kulmiye Party was widely accused of tightening his grip on the nation since 2017, fears that many saw confirmed in 2022 with the first delay to scheduled presidential elections expected to have been an easy triumph for the opposition Waddani Party. Since Somaliland has forged an international partnership with the Republic of China (Taiwan), a similar state struggling with formal recognition internationally, foreign investment has increased rapidly in the country, and the preservation of its democracy means more than ever.

Ostensibly, President Bihi and the Kulmiye demand that down ballot elections occur prior to the presidential vote, while the opposition demand that presidential elections be held first. However, Bihi's position is seen by observers such as the pro-democracy research organization FreedomHouse as worryingly similar to that of a potential dictator, prompting FreedomHouse to dramatically lower Somaliland's democracy scores and declare that Bihi was no longer subject to free and fair elections. Supporters of the Waddani Party took to the streets in 2022 to protest the decision to delay the presidential election by two years, sparking clashes with government workers that led to five deaths and ended the country's remarkable twenty five year lack of significant political violence. Further complicating the



situation is an unprecedented spillover of violence between the Islamist group Al-Shabaab and the government of Somalia into secessionist Somaliland, used to justify police measures that critics of President Bihi see as authoritarian. Protests came to a head in December of 2022 after the killing of a young man by the Somaliland police led to unrest in the city of Laas Caanood. The deaths of twenty civilians at the hands of security forces ensued, sending the country's national climate veering rapidly into authoritarianism amidst allegations by clan groups such as the Darafyada that the President was engaging in ethnic suppression.

Laas Caanood remains the site of conflict between pro-government forces and anti-Bihi militias, but the unrest has forced a compromise to schedule down ballot and presidential together on November 13th of this year, pitting President Bihi primarily against former Speaker of the House Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi. However, since 2022, journalists have faced arrest at the hands of the Bihi Administration for covering opposition activities, while Bihi's government has sought the support of neighboring Ethiopia, where ethnic reprisals against the minority Tigray have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Somaliland's elections are, undeniably, no longer free and fair, but this November's elections offered the best opportunity to restore a beacon of African democracy through non-violent means. Surprisingly, President Bihi was defeated at the polls and has indicated that the peaceful transfer of power in Somaliland shall continue.

INTERNATIONAL DETENTION

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER

THE NIGHTMARE OF A SYRIAN REFUGEE CAMP TURNED DETENTION CENTER

By Davin Khan '28

After the fall of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, those who lived under its rule were driven into Al-Hol, a former refugee camp. The former refugee camp has since become a detention center, containing around 50,000 individuals. This ranges from refugees who were previously in the camp, those who had voluntarily joined ISIS, refugees who fled the violence, and individuals who were forced to join. Individuals hail from many different countries, with large populations from Syria and Iraq. Critically, roughly half of the population is made up of children under the age of 11. Yet, despite these demographics, all individuals in Al-Hol face indefinite detention, with little plans for repatriation or prosecution.

In Al-Hol, torture and death are common. The interior of the camp is effectively under ISIS control. Religious police pressure women to cover up or face the punishment of floggings and execution, people who pass information to camp authorities are shot, NGO-run schools and clinics are destroyed, and more. The camp is operated by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an ally of the United States, and many in Al-Hol are transferred to SDF detention centers. In these centers, the SDF routinely engages in torture, with cases of electrocution, sexual assault, stress positions, beatings, and whippings, with inmates living in inhumane conditions. The SDF often arbitrarily sends people to detention centers, such as selecting boys after they reach around the age of 12 because of fears of radicalization by ISIS. The conditions of Al-Hol led the United Nations to call it a "blight on the conscience of humanity."

International organizations have called upon governments with nationals in Al-Hol to conduct repatriation, but this has faced significant barriers. Stigma against individuals who are perceived to be associated with ISIS, whether voluntary or not, makes reintegration difficult. Moreover, many refugees have had their homes destroyed, and many children lack documentation restricting access to services and making them difficult to identify.

Ultimately, Al-Hol is a neverending nightmare that must be addressed by the international community in order to protect basic human rights.

MARCELLUS WILLIAMS

By Ambika Gupta '27

Marcellus Williams was executed on September 24th, 2024 at 6:10 p.m. The state "destroyed or corrupted the evidence that could conclusively prove his innocence," according to the Innocence Project—a national nonprofit that frees the wrongfully convicted.

Williams was convicted of first-degree murder, robbery, and burglary in Missouri in 2001. He continuously avowed his innocence.

Gayle's family and the prosecuting attorney opposed William's execution. "Marcellus Williams should be alive today...If there is even the shadow of a doubt of innocence, the death penalty should never be an option. This outcome did not serve the interests of justice," Wesley Bell, the prosecuting attorney, said shortly after William's execution. The prosecution's case was based entirely on two incentivized witnesses promised leniency and/or money. The statements contradicted the crime scene and their own earlier statements.

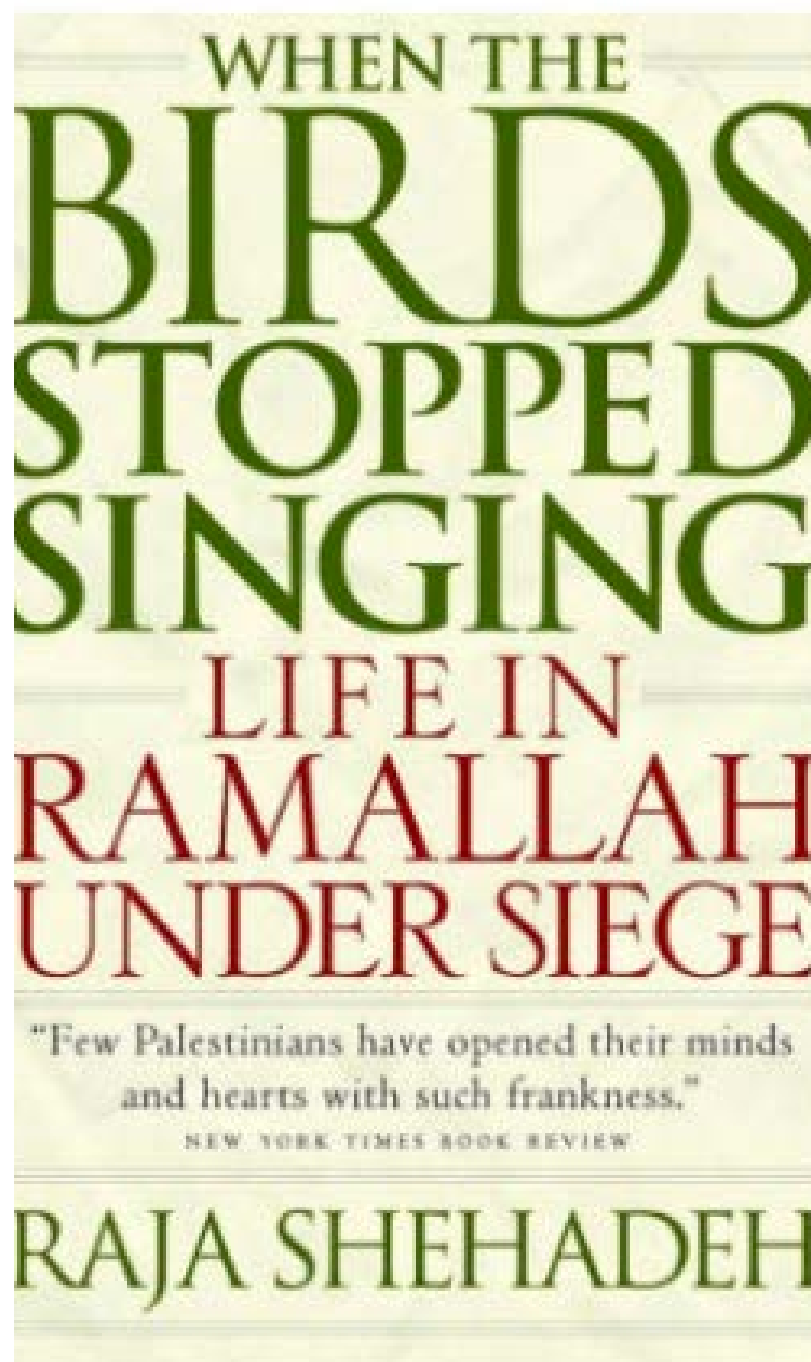
The crime scene contained forensic evidence, specifically fingerprints, hair, and DNA on the murder weapon (a knife from Gayle's kitchen). The forensic evidence was tested in 2016 after the Missouri Supreme Court stayed his execution. None of the forensic evidence matched Williams.

Racial discrimination contributed to his conviction. Williams's jury consisted of 11 white people and only one black person. The prosecutor successfully removed 6 of the 7 qualified Black prospective jurors.

Williams was likely one of many innocent people behind bars in the United States. A conservative estimate published in the Harvard Public Health Magazine estimates that 1% of the prison population, or around 22,000 people, are in prison for a crime they did not commit. However, most estimates suggest that between 2.5-5% of prisoners are wrongfully convicted.

Interested in writing your own piece about human rights issues or joining the Amnesty International task force? Contact AGupta80@cmc.edu

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



The Day the Birds Stopped Singing- Life in Ramallah Under Siege

(Steerforth, August 2003)

By Raja Shehadeh

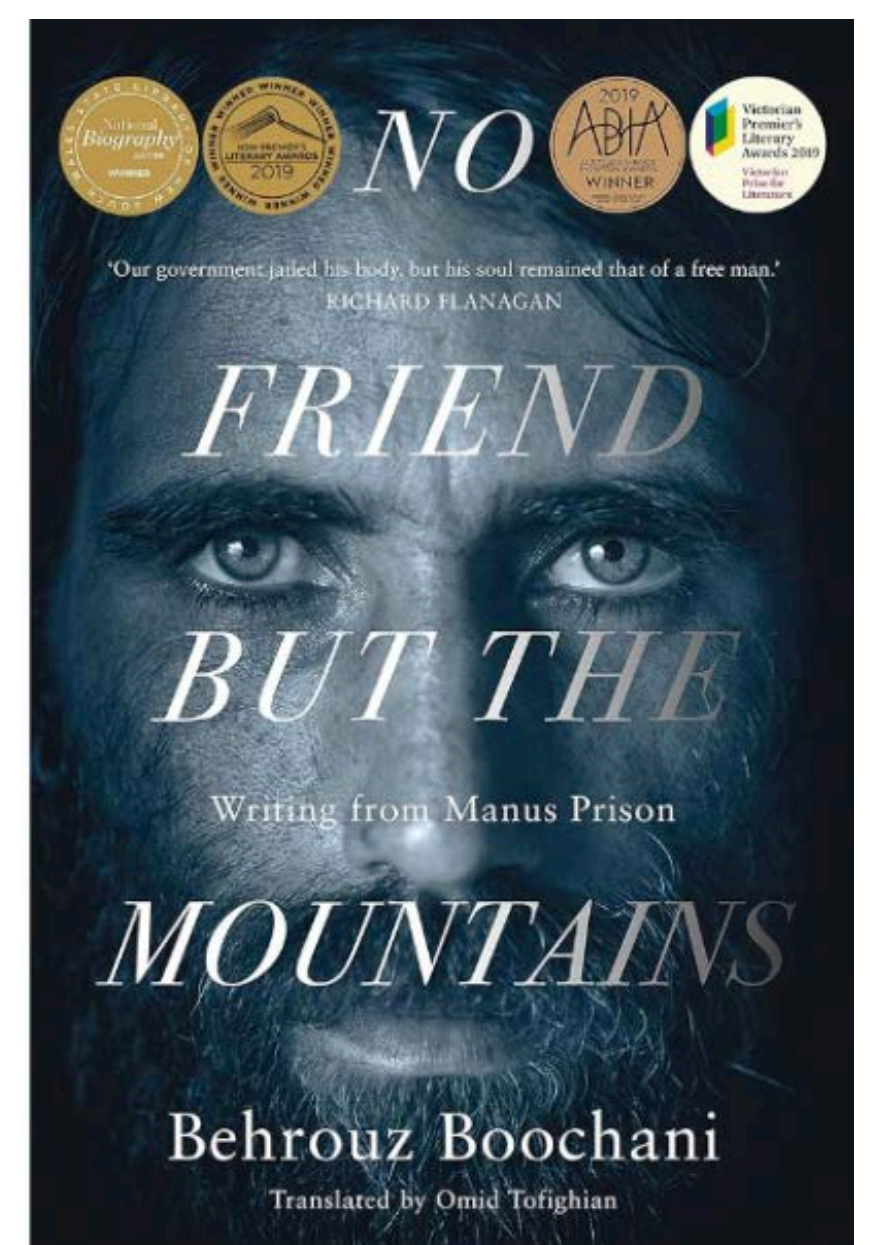
In March 2002, the author, lawyer and human rights activist, Raja Shehadeh was standing at the end of his road as an Israeli tank approached him. His book, *The Day the Birds Stopped Singing: Life in Ramallah Under Siege*, is the first to account the Israeli military assault in Palestine in March 2002. Through vivid diary entries, Shehadeh recounts the isolation, fear, and resilience of ordinary Palestinians living under curfew and military threat. With political insight combined with heartfelt storytelling, the book provides a new perspective of conflict in Palestine and a poignant reflection on survival and hope amidst turmoil.

No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison

(Anansi International, June 2019)

By Behrouz Boochani

No Friend but the Mountains is a firsthand account of Behrouz Boochani's detention in Australia's offshore immigration system. Boochani, a Kurdish-Iranian journalist, fled persecution in Iran and was detained on Manus Island in 2013 after seeking asylum in Australia. Written via text messages on a smuggled phone, the book combines memoir and analysis to critique dehumanization of refugees. It provides a vital perspective on displacement and resilience.



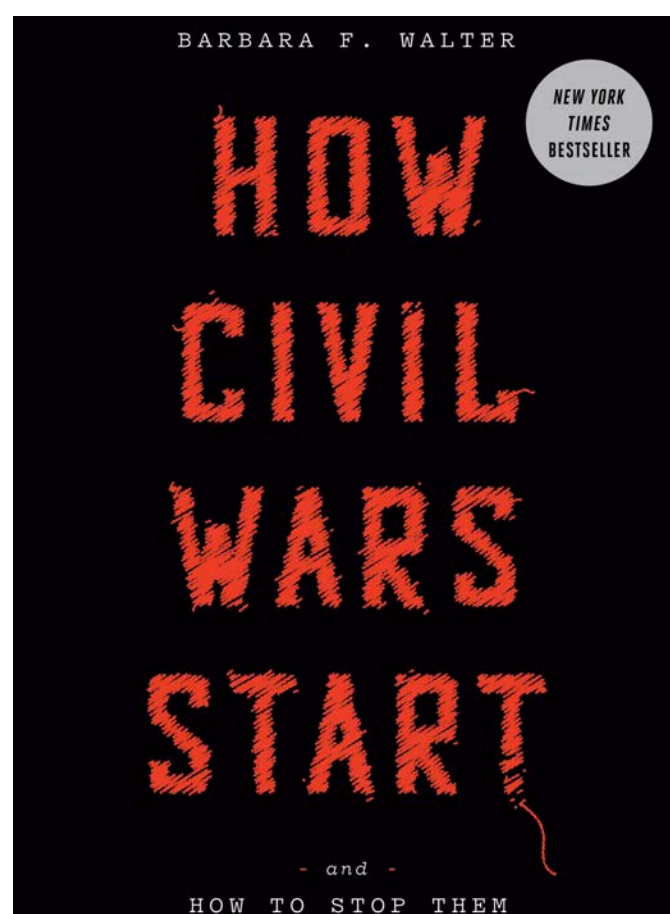
BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them

(Crown, April 2023)

By Barbara F. Walter

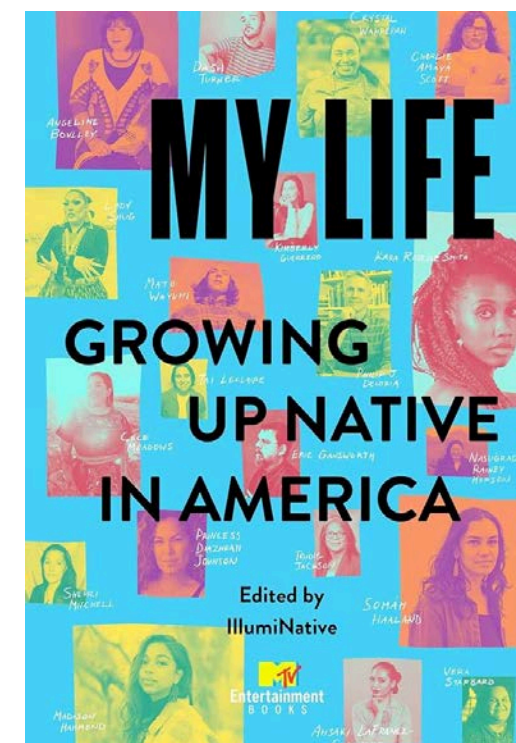
How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them offers a comprehensive analysis of the causes and dynamics behind civil wars. Drawing on extensive research, Barbara F. Walter explains how societies become vulnerable to internal conflict, focusing on the role of political instability, identity, and power struggles. She argues that preventing civil wars requires early intervention and policy changes, making the book an essential resource for understanding global security threats. Walter's work is crucial for scholars and policymakers interested in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.



My Life: Growing up Native in America

(MTV Books, October 2024)

By IllumiNative



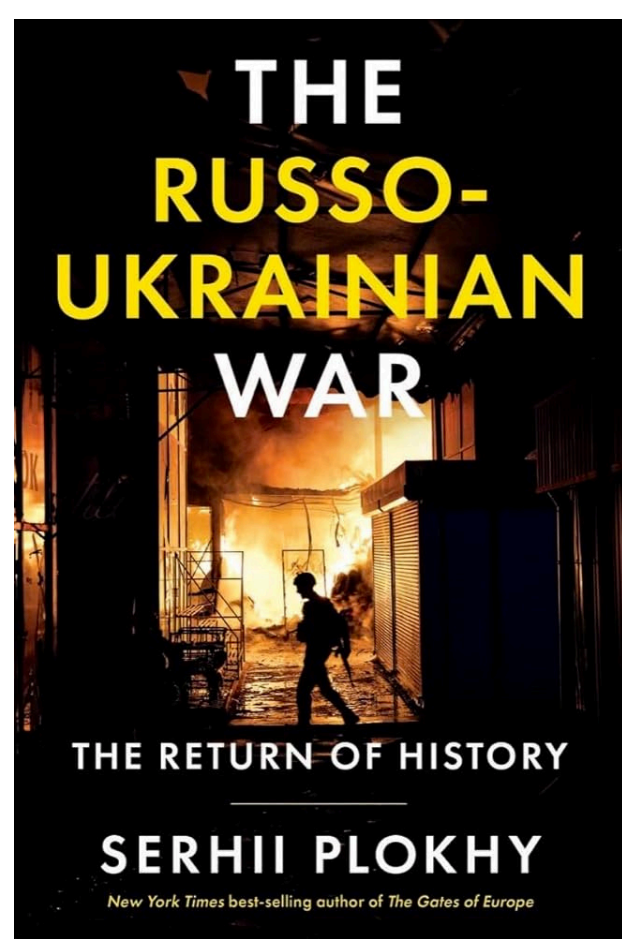
My Life: Growing Up Native in America by IllumiNative offers a powerful collection of stories from Native Americans about their experiences growing up in the United States. The book provides personal insights into the challenges of navigating identity and culture. Systemic barriers of Natives highlights the resilience and strength of their communities. This work is a vital contribution to understanding Native American life, shedding light on issues of representation and generational trauma. The ongoing fight for rights and recognition is a human rights issue faced not only in America.

Russo-Ukrainian War: The Return of History

(W. W. Norton & Company, May 2023)

By Serhii Plokhy

Russo-Ukrainian War: The Return of History by Serhii Plokhy was published in 2023 in the context of the current war between Ukraine and Russia and provides a historical lens through which to understand the ongoing conflict. Plokhy explores the deep-rooted historical, political, and cultural factors that have shaped the war, focusing on Russian imperialism, Ukrainian nationalism, and global power dynamics. This analysis is essential for understanding the current crisis and its broader implications for Eastern Europe and international relations.



2024-25 MGRUBLIAN STAFF

Student Assistants



Georgia Alford '28 - A first-year student from Atlanta, Georgia who plans to study Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, Spanish, and become fluent in Arabic. At CMC, she is a Junior Analyst for the Finances and REITs group of the Student Investment Fund and a member of the Model United Nations Team. She has volunteered with non-profits and community organizations in her hometown that addressed a variety of issues like food insecurity and youth art education. Georgia is passionate about creating global change by addressing accessibility to healthcare and working in global diplomacy, she is interested in going abroad to work with international organizations in regions like Latin America, East Africa and the Middle East. Outside of academics, Georgia enjoys hanging out with her friends, traveling, reading, art, and going to LA.



Jenner Baumhackl '28 - A freshman from Hood River, Oregon, who is undecided on a major but hopes to explore his interest in criminal justice and wrongful convictions while considering law school. Having grown up in a rural small town, opportunities to create tangible change within his local community drew him to social justice and equality. Jenner previously served as president of his local Leadership, Experience, Opportunity, and Service Club (LEOS) where he led youth volunteer efforts in fundraising for crisis-relief projects, supporting underprivileged community members, and more. He most recently spearheaded a dine out event that paid off remaining meal debt for low-income students in his school district. He enjoys playing 5C club tennis, solving crosswords, and skiing and mountain biking. Jenner is eager to work with the Mgrublian Center and join its community of like-minded individuals passionate about human rights.



Annie Bernstein '27 - A sophomore who is pursuing a major in International Relations with a focus on the Middle East. From an early age, she recognized the importance of upholding human rights and democracy, shaped by her heritage as a descendant of Holocaust survivors and Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union, who sought asylum in both the United States and Israel. Her passion for human rights advocacy began in high school when she participated in the Hands of Peace program, which brought teenagers from the United States, Israel, and the West Bank to San Diego to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through daily dialogue sessions to bridge peace and understanding. This past summer, Annie interened as a research assistant at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv, Israel. Her research focused on the change in European perceptions of Israel since October 7, 2023, and the ways in which human rights issues and claims of genocide have contributed to these changing perceptions. On campus, Annie is a part of the Open Academy, an initiative aimed at promoting constructive dialogue surrounding controversial topics. She is also a First Year Guide and a board member of Haverim, a student-run organization focused on combating campus anti-semitism. Annie is honored to have the opportunity to work alongside the Mgrublian Center to continue advocating for human rights!



Bhanu Cheepurupalli '25 - A fourth year passionate about climate technology and investing in humanitarian innovation in the Global South, she has conducted evaluative work for UNICEF, Oxfam, Amnesty International, and the Oxford Majlis Society. On campus, she researches international politics for Professor Fortner's "Insult to Injury: U.S. Politics and the International War on Drugs," Professor Jones' newest publication of "Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction" and the Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment's EnviroLab Asia. Bhanu continued analyzing foreign aid fluctuations in China and India and markers for biodiversity credits as a student researcher with the Global Priorities Institute this past summer. She is Rights and Result Based Management and Programme Planning Process certified. This coming year, she will be helping build an interdisciplinary climate justice initiative between the Mgrublian Center, the Roberts Environmental Center and the Financial Enterprise Institute.



Catalina de la Peña '27 - A sophomore from Miami, Florida majoring in Philosophy and Government, her passion for human rights is inspired by her family's experience of leaving Cuba and immigrating to the United States. In high school, she expanded her interest in government and human rights by interning at Congresswoman Salazar's Office and participating on the debate team. On campus, she serves as an event commissioner for ASCMC, First-Year Guide, member of PATH Consulting, and a Handley Leadership fellow. In her free time, Catalina enjoys playing soccer and pursuing her passion for photography. She is excited to work with the Mgrublian Center and supporting the center's impactful work.



Gabriel Gardner '28 - A freshman from the Bay Area, California majoring in Government, with a sequence in Legal Studies, Gabe has been very involved in pursuing justice, advocacy, and DEI work, and began this through his role as an intern to the Contra Costa County (Bay Area) head of DEI work. He is passionate about leaving the world a better place than he found it, and to lead this charge in any way he can. At CMC, he is a Research Assistant in the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies, working under Dr. Michael Fortner researching Drugs and the American Experience. On top of this, he is also an educator for the Prisoner Education Project, and a member of Haverim, the 5C Jewish student union. He is incredibly honored and excited to work at the Mgrublian Center this year to further his education surrounding human rights and other related issues.



Gabriel Goldstein '27 - A sophomore from Highland Park, Illinois majoring in Government and Economics and pursuing a sequence in Ancient and Medieval Studies at Claremont McKenna College. He is passionate about human rights, particularly at its intersection with political and economic systems. His work is characterized by a dedication to evidence-based advocacy and promotion of positive change in marginalized communities. At the Mgrublian Center, Gabriel is excited to support initiatives advancing human rights education and advocacy. On campus, he is a member of Model United Nations and the RLCIE Fellows Program, and in his free time, he enjoys playing Intramural Sports.



Ambika Gupta '27 - A sophomore from Illinois, majoring in Government and Economics, she manages the Mgrublian Center's Amnesty International Task Force and the Watch Tower podcast. This past summer, she was on the Thai-Burma border in Mae Sot where she interned at an educational non-profit doing research and teaching English to Burmese migrants. After graduation, she plans to go to law school and advocate for human rights in the legal arena. She is excited for another impactful year with the Mgrublian Center.



Angela Gushue '25 - A pre-medicine senior interested in the intersection of public health and human rights. In fifth grade, she founded her first advocacy group and since then, her activism has continued and expanded. Now, in her fourth year as a student assistant, Angela will continue researching the history of Nazi science and uncovering the development of the eugenics movement. Throughout her time at the Mgrublian Center, she has led the mentorship program and edited the website. When she isn't working at the Center, Angela runs cross country and track, mentors young musicians, and studies at local coffee shops.



Labiba Hassan '25 - A Philosophy and Public Affairs Major with a Data Science Sequence, Labiba is passionate about social justice. She focuses on the intersection of policy, ethics, and data-driven solutions to systemic issues. She has worked with The Sentry and Save the Children, contributing to research and advocacy efforts on global human rights challenges. As a journalist, she has covered human rights issues and has had the opportunity to interview experts in the field. She is especially committed to education issues — such as access to quality education and resources for underserved students. In her free time, she enjoys taking on new hobbies, with photography being her favorite.



Sophia Lakhani '27 - A sophomore from Calgary, Canada, she is majoring in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE). At the Center, she leads the Women's Rights Task Force, co-leads the mentorship program, co-hosts the Watch Tower Podcast, and works on a human rights and climate change research collaboration with the Roberts Environmental Center. Sophia spent this past summer interning in Kampala, Uganda helping establish Musizi University—the first liberal arts college in the country. Sophia designed course curricula, launched the University's Center for African Arts and Culture, and taught debate-centered workshops to Ugandan high-school students. In her free time, she enjoys photography, travelling, and spending time with her dog, Enzo. Sophia looks forward to continuing to work with the Mgrublian team and enacting change within the local and global community!



Michelle Lee '28 - A freshman pursuing a dual major in Public Policy and Philosophy, her passion for student advocacy is reflected in her extensive work with non-profits like the California Association of Student Councils (CASC) and GENup. As a state council member and student board member for CASC, she played a vital role in amplifying student voices in California's education reform efforts. Over three years, she helped guide the development of 21 bill proposals on education reform, many which were presented before the California Senate and Assembly Education Committees. On campus, Michelle serves as the Associate Director of Communications for the Claremont Law & Business Review and is actively involved in APAM. In her free time, she enjoys portrait sketching, photography, traveling, and connecting with new people.



Guadalupe Loza-Mendez '25 - A senior from Pomona, California, Guadalupe is dual majoring in Economics and International Relations. Her passion lies in advocating for international democracy, human rights, and social impact, with a particular regional focus on Latin America. Through her internships in non-profits and international NGOs like Asociación CREAM, XUMEX, ReRooted Archive, and Freedom House, she leveraged both data-driven tools and people's stories to drive locally-driven projects for sustainable change in communities internationally. On campus, Guadalupe is a CARE Fellow, participates in SOURCE Non-Profit Consulting, and is a Handley Women in Leadership Fellow. She loves watercolor painting, thrifting, and donkeys.



Alana Nahabedian '27 - A sophomore from Las Vegas, Nevada, studying International Relations and Human Rights, Genocide, and Holocaust studies. As an Armenian whose surname is traced to the founder of Armenia, Hayk Nahabed, Alana's ethnic heritage and the plight of her ancestors provide the basis for her unwavering commitment to human rights and her interest in being a part of the Mgrublian Center. Alana founded the Armenian Youth Council, a grassroots organization dedicated to uplifting and expanding Armenian voices, serving as a united force for Armenian youth to collaborate and work for change. At CMC, Alana is the President of both the 5C Armenian Student Association and the United Nations Association, an Associate Consultant at SOURCE Nonprofit Consulting, and an International Journalism Fellow at the Keck Center. This year, she also serves as the Associate Podcast Manager at the Mgrublian center.



Shivom Parihar '28 - A freshman studying global politics and religion, Shiv's passion for human rights is rooted in his lived experience as a survivor of domestic violence and extreme poverty in Utah. From these experiences, he has gone on to serve as a writer, editor, and activist focused on homelessness issues, including contributing for several publications and working in the political sphere to build a bipartisan awareness of solutions for the unsheltered. On campus, he remains politically active with a focus on civil dialogue through the spoken and written word.



Alejandro Quiroz-Novela '26 - A junior with a dual major in Government and Public Policy and a focus on Gender and Sexuality Studies. Originally from South Central L.A., he is passionate about domestic social policy, particularly in the areas of education, reproductive/sexual healthcare, social safety net programs, and civil rights. His experience includes policy internships and sexual health peer education roles with Connecticut Against Gun Violence and Black Women for Wellness, respectively. On campus, he serves as a CARE Fellow, Advocate, and Vice-President of ¡Mi Gente! In his free time, Alejandro enjoys shopping at thrift and vintage stores, discovering new eateries, and yapping with friends!



Maram Sharif '26 - A junior studying Economics and Finance with a passion for community development and education policy, Maram is dedicated to making a meaningful impact through her role as the newsletter's co-editor. Her experiences include internships in sustainability at Bahrain Petroleum Company as well as curriculum development for Musizi University in Uganda. As a Robert Day Scholar, Maram thrives in research and leadership roles, working closely with her community to foster positive change both locally and internationally.



Sasha Shunko '25- A senior who starts each day with a cup of coffee and a slight existential crisis about climate change and its implications on societies. She initially got involved with the Center through a project on Russian propaganda against Ukraine, and as her path has progressed, human rights issues have stayed at the root of her focus. Sasha is studying International Relations and Economics, working on the environment-related partnership between Mgrublian and the Roberts Environmental Center as well as working on the Mgrublian Center's podcast, The Watchtower. On campus she also co-leads the Triathlon team so, when she is not at the computer lab ferociously typing, you can find her complaining about the biking, swimming, and running practices she has planned and executed herself.



Rachel Svoyskiy '26 - A junior dual majoring in economics and government. Her passion for human rights is rooted in her Jewish heritage, her family's experiences as Soviet immigrants, and her close connections to Israel. Rachel has extensive experience in policy research, government advocacy, and nonprofit work, including internships at the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Strength to Strength, a nonprofit supporting victims of terrorism. As a Board Member of Claremont Chabad, she is committed to combating antisemitism and advocating for justice on campus and beyond. Rachel is eager to contribute to the Mgrublian Center by advancing critical human rights initiatives through research, advocacy, and education. She looks forward to making a meaningful impact on human rights issues, particularly in the areas of antisemitism and global justice, drawing on her personal experiences and dedication to these causes.



Ilma Turcios '25 - A Government and Economics dual major from Miami, FL. Driven by a passion for human rights in Latin America, with a focus on women, Ilma has dedicated her time at CMC to getting involved in projects dedicated to this field. Her experience in the non-profit sector is extensive, having participated in internships in human rights INGOs like: FUNADEH, Xumek-Derechos Humanos, the Rerooted Archive, and the Luisa Hairabedian Foundation. Given her passion for writing, Ilma has an interest in the role of narrative and storytelling in the defense of human rights. On campus, she is also a Resident Assistant, a CARE Fellow, and a research assistant for Professor Nicholas Buccola at the Salvatori Center. Outside of academics, she is a coffee connoisseur and loves art and dinosaur-themed items.



Kyra Variyava '25 - Driven by a commitment to foster positive change, Kyra is an Economics and International Relations major with a focus on development practices and economic development policymaking. Her journey includes impactful roles at the Evaluation Office at UNICEF and investigative research at think tanks such as The Sentry. With experiences ranging from policy analysis at the United Nations Global Compact Network India to creative projects like The Sonic Skyline, she is dedicated to creating impact through a blend of analytical rigor, creative problem-solving, and a passion for making a tangible difference in communities around the globe.



Sofia Weinstein '26 - A junior from the Bay Area, California, studying Economics and Finance. Her dedication to justice and advocacy began in high school by starting a nonprofit organization that provides free tutoring to disadvantaged students and a student-run racial equity leadership program. Having family members who were Holocaust survivors, she is very passionate about Holocaust education, awareness, and research. In addition, she believes that it is critical to combat anti-semitism at the 5Cs and beyond. In her free time, she enjoys playing tennis with friends and going out to the Claremont Village. She is incredibly excited to continue working at the Mgrublian Center this year!



Joseph Zhong '25 - A senior from Omaha, Nebraska, studying Economics and Public Policy, he is deeply passionate about shedding light on the biggest issues of today, bringing a multi-perspective approach and raising awareness on crises around the world. Joseph has built the Watchtower from the ground up, founding the podcast in its pilot season three years ago. As the student manager of the Watchtower, Joseph leads an incredible podcast team that are dedicated to sharing diverse perspectives, spotlighting human actions to alleviate suffering, and proposing potential avenues to increase humanitarian action. Outside of his involvement with the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights, Joseph is often spotted giving prospective students tours, hiking in the mountains, or discussing state and local policies at the Rose Institute of State and Local Government.



Claire Moore '26 - A Literature and Government dual major from Connecticut. Her interest in human rights began with a passion for LGBTQ+ rights. This passion has since grown to include global justice and genocide studies, alongside the strong sense of responsibility she feels to fight antisemitism. Claire has been fortunate to work at several innovative NGOs across Europe, including in cities such as Geneva, Warsaw, and Prague. She is very grateful to the Mgrublian for the support it lent her last year as a Roth Research Fellow and Human Rights Summer Intern and looks forward to continuing her involvement. In her free time, Claire enjoys reading books about unhinged women, pickling (not kidding), and playing with her German Shepards: Oscar and new puppy Zelda!

2024-25 MGRUBLIAN STAFF

John K. Roth Research Fellows



Max Johnson '27 - A sophomore interested in studying government and economics. On campus, he is Director of Tournaments for Claremont McKenna Mock Trial and is also a bike technician at the bike shop. Off campus, he volunteers to complete youth immigration cases for children petitioning for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) and has prior experience in immigration law. His real-world experience in immigration has inspired him to delve deeper into the structural barriers that endanger lives through the Mgrublian Center's Roth Human Rights Research Fellowship. His paper will investigate how judge shopping - the practice of filing cases in cherry-picked federal district courts to receive certain judges - has elicited controversial rulings in the form of nationwide injunctions, halting nationwide policy. Though legal experts recognize the primary purpose of the court manipulation to achieve a partisan end, the unrecognized truth reveals human rights violations against vulnerable groups, such as youth immigrants, asylees, and families. He wishes to employ research skills learned from the Roth Human Rights Research Fellowship to pursue a career at the intersection of human rights and government. In his free time, he also enjoys playing tennis and spending time with his dog, Ruby.



Amar Toric '27 - A sophomore from Cave Creek, Arizona, studying Economics with plans for medical school. He is a Podlich scholar, marketing director of the Real Estate Finance Association, co-founder of the Eastern European and Central Asian Student Union, research assistant in Professor Budischak's bird pathology lab, and a member of the Claremont Men's Lacrosse team. Inspired by his mother's resilience during the Siege of Sarajevo—the longest in modern history—Amar was profoundly shaped by her experiences and his summer private equity internship in Bosnia. This dual influence has driven him to research the critical intersection of post-genocide society and education, addressing a significant gap in genocide studies. In his free time, Amar explores the philosophy of the mind-body problem, experiments with Noma-style fermentation, and curates a collection of stylish bowties. Amar is honored to be a John K. Roth Fellow and eagerly anticipates the opportunities ahead.



Shelby McIlroy '26 - A junior from Orange County, CA, studying Government with a leadership sequence. On campus, Shelby is a member of the CMS Women's Volleyball team and the Empowering Women in Sports Club. Her mother, Stacey McIlroy, attended CMC and wrote her thesis under Professor John K. Roth. Having grown up around the CMC community and attended Professor Roth's Athenaeum talks as a kid, Shelby was inspired to get involved in the Mgrublian Center and pursue her passion to learn from, educate and contribute to the Human Rights community. Shelby's research project on the Trauma of Holocaust Survivors in Latin America is driven by her experience in Professor and Director Wendy Lower's Researching the Holocaust seminar, where she discovered her passion for Holocaust studies. In her research, Shelby plans to analyze the psychological and emotional consequences of surviving a genocide, as well as investigate how trauma from the Holocaust can be passed down generationally. Her focus will be on the region of Latin America, where perpetrators and survivors emigrated and coexisted after the Holocaust.



Anjali Thakore '25 - A senior at CMC, dual majoring in International Relations and History, and minoring in Human Rights, Genocide, and Holocaust Studies. Her interests have primarily coalesced around war crime prevention, international human rights law, and transitional justice, with a particular focus on the gendered experiences of genocide and the mitigation of conflict-related sexual violence. She has previously worked at the UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the International Peace Institute, and The Sentry. In her spare time, Anjali enjoys reading poetry, visiting art museums, and curating Spotify playlists.



Nicolas Changbencharoen '26 - A junior majoring in Government and History, with a minor in Human Rights, Genocide, and Holocaust Studies. With a strong background in research, he has contributed to projects at the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies and the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies. As a John Roth Fellow at the MGrublian Center, he is conducting research on modern slavery in Thailand, focusing specifically on the inadequacies of current legal frameworks in preventing human rights violations among migrant workers in the seafood industry.



Keith Maben '28 - A freshman from Santa Clara, CA studying Government. He has a strong background in immigration law, having worked with the Santa Clara County Democratic Party on a resolution providing legal support to immigrants, and with Professor William Lincoln on a research project about expanding access to the H1B visa. During his fellowship, he looks forward to researching human rights abuses on the US-Mexico border, critiquing federal and state-level immigration policies, and interviewing key stakeholders at the border. On campus, Keith is also a Research Assistant at the Rose Institute of State and Local Government, an Associate Consultant at the Graphite group, and a member of the CMC Model United Nations team.

LOOKING AHEAD

Spring 2025 Programming

- February 4th, 5:30pm – *Engage in the Change: Our Generation Must Own Democracy*, David Hogg, co-founder *March for our Lives*, CMC Athenaeum.
- February 5th, 12:00pm – *The Holocaust by Bullets and its Legacy in Contemporary Genocides and Mass Atrocities*, Marco Gonzalez, director Yahad-in Unum, CMC Athenaeum.
- February 6th, 4:00-6:00pm – Summer Opportunities Meet-Up, McKenna Auditorium.
- March 5th, 12:15pm - *Immigration Policy Q&A*, panel discussion featuring Professors Taw and Zarkin; co-sponsored with the Amnesty International task force. KRV 102.
- March 6th, 5:30pm – *Prostitution Policy: Global Perspectives on Legislating the Sex Trade*, Melanie Thompson and Yasmin Vafa, CMC Athenaeum.
- March 7th, 12:15pm - Human Rights Career Panel, Kravis 103.
- March 11th, 12:00pm – *Eugenics at the US-Mexico Border: A History*, Isidro Gonzalez, Visiting Professor of History, CMC Athenaeum.
- March 17-21st – Spring Break DC Networking Trek, featuring visits to Mgrublian Center partners.
- March 24th, 5:45pm – *Norita*, film screening and Q&A with producer Sarah Schoellkopf, Pickford Auditorium.
- March 25th, 5:30pm - *Art as a Weapon for Change: Social Justice, Social Cohesion, and Reconciliation*, John Kani. CMC Athenaeum.
- March 26th, 4:30pm - *Black Panther*, film screening & Q&A with John Kani, Pickford Auditorium.
- March 26th, 5:30pm – *50 Children: the Rescue Mission of Mr. and Mrs. Kraus*, film screening and remarks by the film’s director, Steve Pressman, CMC Athenaeum.
- March 31st, 5:30pm – *Afghan Dreamers + Storytelling for Social Change*, film screening and remarks by Beth Murphy, filmmaker and journalist. Annual WLA event, CMC Athenaeum.
- April 17th, 2:00-4:30pm – Mgrublian Center Spring Advisory Broad Meeting, Kravis 367.
- April 17th, 5:30-8:00pm – *Exploring the Path to Personal and International Peace*, General Roméo Dallaire, former commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, Annual Mgrublian lecture, CMC Athenaeum.
- April 18th, 10:00am-1:00pm – *Ethical Leadership*, workshop featuring General Roméo Dallaire and Marie Claude Michaud. In collaboration with the Keck Center for International & Strategic Studies.
- May 8th, 12:00-2:00pm – 2024-25 John K. Roth Research Fellowship Presentations.



MGRUBLIAN CENTER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS

CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE



@mgrubliancenter



The Watchtower



Claremont McKenna College
The Kravis Center, 3rd Floor
850 Columbia Avenue, Claremont, CA 91711