

THE MGRUBLIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



**"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but
nothing can be changed until it is faced."**

- James Baldwin



A Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

As we share this edition of the newsletter, we're marking a small transition behind the scenes. After four years working on this publication, this will be my final issue as Editor. It's been a steady and meaningful part of my time at the Mgrublian Center, and I'm grateful for the chance to help spotlight the Center's work and the students, faculty, and partners who drive it forward. This newsletter is far from a solo effort. Each edition comes together because of a wonderful team who contribute story ideas, interviews, edits, designs, and coordination. We are thankful for the entire team that makes this possible.

This year's programming has continued to show how valuable the Center is—inviting thoughtful speakers to campus, onboarding inspiring board members, supporting student research, and creating space for difficult but necessary conversations. Compiling this newsletter has been a way for us to capture those efforts and share them with the broader community.

As we wrap up this issue and prepare for the semester ahead, I'm also excited to pass the role on to Georgia, who has been working closely with the team, and will be taking the lead on the newsletter going forward!

We hope you find this edition informative and reflective of the work happening across the Center. We thank you for your continued support of the Mgrublian Center and the students who make up the Mgrublian community. It has been a privilege to contribute to this publication over the years.

Warm regards,
Maram Sharif '26
Co-Editor (Outgoing)

Georgia Alford '28
Co-Editor (Incoming)

Inside THIS ISSUE

04

**Welcome to the
New Director**

06

Summer Interns

11

Joseph Saba

13

Podcast Program

14

William Menard '09

16

Op-Eds

18

**Board Member Highlight:
Alan Fenning '72**

19

**Professor Highlight:
Dr. Cesar Daniel Vargas**

21

Task Force Updates

26

**Board Member Highlight:
June Bayha '94**

27

**Professor Highlight:
Dr. Rima Basu**

28

**Book
Recommendations**

31

**Student Staff &
Research Fellows**

39

Looking Ahead



WELCOME TO THE NEW DIRECTOR **HEATHER FERGUSON**

By Georgia Alford '28

This fall marked a transition for the Mgrublian Center as we welcomed our new director, Heather Ferguson, Associate Professor of History. Recently, I sat down with Professor Ferguson for an in depth discussion of what she brings to the Mgrublian Center as the new director, her goals and vision for the future, and how she sees the Center itself positioned in the greater endeavor of Genocide, the Holocaust, and Human Rights Studies.

Professor Ferguson was appointed last Spring to succeed Professor Wendy Lower, (CMC's John K. Roth Professor of History and George R. Roberts Fellow) who herself had been director for over a decade, taking the reins from Professor Emeritus Edward Haley in 2014.

"I think the crucial thing to think about here is how there is so much power and potential in the fact that I am coming in after Professor Lower was director for 11 years and established [Mgrublian's] significance as a center for Holocaust and human rights-centered programming, research, and scholarly attention", said Ferguson.

Ferguson's scholarship in Middle Eastern Studies, the Early Modern Period, and the Ottoman Empire brings a new historical perspective to Mgrublian, an ancient one. Ferguson herself describes the "chronological arc" she traverses as a professor and a scholar. She mentions the idea of borders and the creation of ethnic and national identity, connecting modern issues to the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Ferguson framed how her Early Modern Period focus informs her perspective within Genocide and Human Rights studies, "[I teach and research] a range of global south questions related to human rights and violence against marginalized groups and how that occurs, [in the early modern period] especially [considering] the transition from large heterogenous empires into confined nation states and policing borders", said Ferguson.

Ferguson also mentioned how she anticipates utilizing her network of academics and scholars in her research area, which is central to how she will bring a global comparative approach to studying genocides. Her background working with

Mutual Aid Organizations and the CMC Open Academy also brings an emphasis on service and student discussion to the forefront of Mgrublian's work on campus and beyond. With Ferguson's broad skillset, she is eager to bring this passion to the initiatives she fosters at the Center.

One of her newest initiatives is a Research In Action working group focused on Immigration policy, enforcement, and consequences. After the Roth fellowships last year showed increased student interest in this topic, Ferguson modeled an interdisciplinary research project bringing together Mgrublian students and faculty from departments like economics, history, and psychology. The working groups would then partner with outside organizations, primarily from the Inland Empire, to provide support for their work in immigration in counties that are consistently under-resourced areas, with escalating immigration and economic problems.

"The goal is public-facing deliverables as well, including websites or resources that can be shared, like fact sheets. Those would be designed based on what practitioners and community partners think they need, so that we're designing research products that meet the needs of those who are working in the field", said Ferguson.

Along with new research and partnerships for the Center, Ferguson wants to embrace the role of Mgrublian on campus and beyond as a place for student discussion and engagement with contemporary issues in human rights, which are often hot-button topics that students are eager to discuss. She draws on her expertise from the Open Academy to bring a space for moderated discussion. Mgrublian can establish a strong foundation for these discussions, with an academic approach to divisive topics, and encourage the acquisition of knowledge for students.

"Our skill set is actually scholarship and an academic approach to topics that others may only address via personal opinion and emotion. Who are the experts we can bring in? How do we demonstrate that even within academia, this topic has become divisive? How has genocide been used as a label for some places, but not others, and how do scholars of genocide studies actually talk about that? You can approach this not just in terms of personal opinion, but also based on acquiring knowledge of how others have attempted to grapple with topics that are often. [Even if] they're not going to have an easy answer", said Ferguson.

Heather Ferguson's vision for the Mgrublian Center is to expand on its presence as a leader in Human Rights scholarship locally and globally. An emphasis on student-led discussions and projects, combined with service to the greater CMC and Inland Empire community will help ensure the future growth of the Center. Under Ferguson's leadership, Mgrublian is sure to flourish and become a space for grassroots organizing, scholarly engagement, and innovative models of research within the fields of human rights, Holocaust, and genocide studies.

SUMMER INTERNSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

CHARLOTTE JORDAN '27

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews
Warsaw, Poland

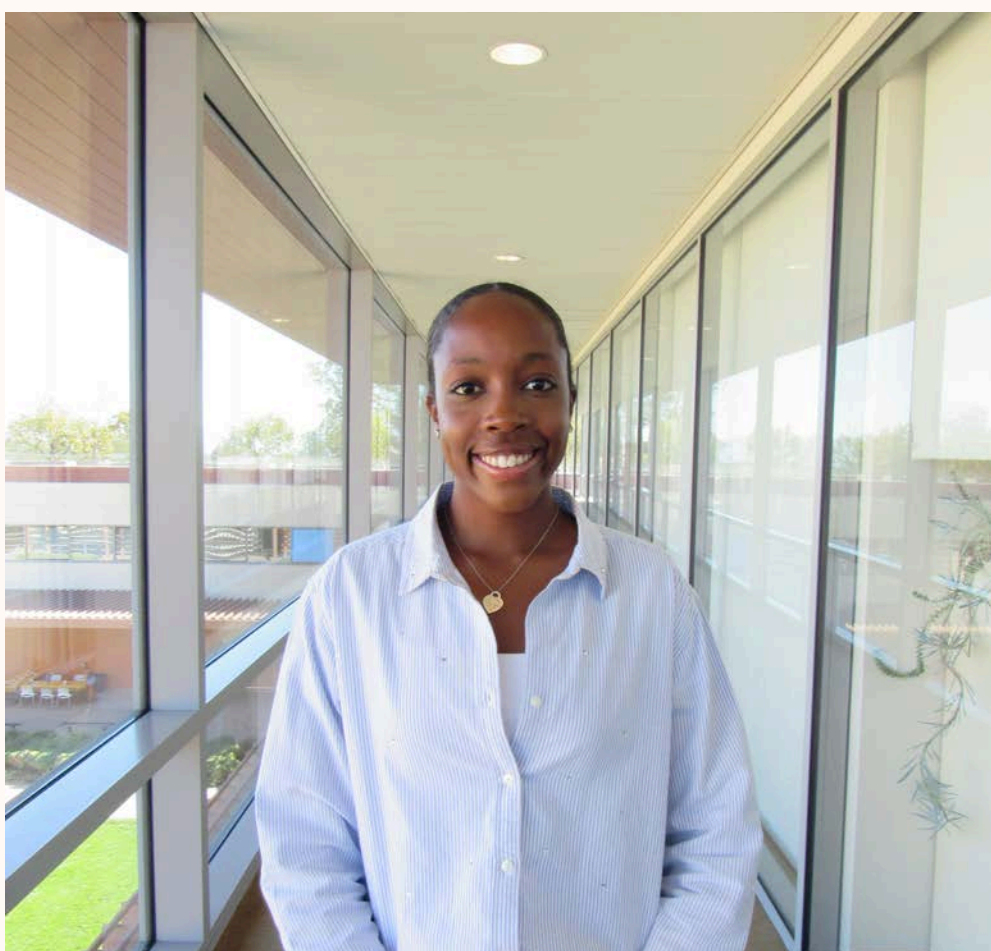
This summer, Charlotte Jordan '27 interned at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, an institution dedicated to preserving a thousand years of Jewish life in Poland. With a curiosity for Holocaust history and a passion for human rights, Charlotte thrived interning with the museum's Communications, Research, and Education departments.

In Communications, she worked closely with staff and another intern to support the launch of the museum's new membership program, helping define membership benefits and draft promotional materials. Charlotte shared that learning to communicate for a public-facing cultural institution was one of the most challenging and rewarding parts of her experience. Within the Research department, she was tasked with studying shifting trends in Holocaust representation across media and academic scholarship. Her project began with a global lens but shifted to a focus on the United States, which has played a defining role in shaping public narratives about the Holocaust due to its comparatively high Jewish population and cultural influence post-WWII. Charlotte supported the Education department's preparations for an international academic conference tied to the museum's temporary exhibition, *1945: Not the End, Not the Beginning*, which explored the choices Polish Jewish survivors faced after the war to remain in Poland or rebuild their lives elsewhere. She assisted with event logistics and was able to attend dozens of academic talks, describing them as "insanely interesting" opportunities to learn directly from scholars around the world.



Her work also involved meaningful public engagement inside the museum such as staffing informational booths, helping host educational activities, and interacting with visitors. Despite not speaking Polish, Charlotte found Warsaw to be welcoming and accessible, especially thanks to colleagues who helped her learn basic Polish phrases and who delighted in exchanging American slang.

Beyond her internship duties, Charlotte explored Warsaw's extensive museum catalog and visited several Holocaust sites as part of her program's curriculum. She traveled across Poland to Kraków and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum; she described the visit as incomprehensible and highly impactful. She took weekend trips to both Prague and Vienna in her free time. One of the most memorable moments of her internship was witnessing the opening of POLIN's new epilogue gallery, a space highlighting the modern-day Polish Jewish diaspora. Charlotte attended the press conference and viewed the exhibition on its opening day. Looking back on her summer, Charlotte emphasized how meaningful it was to work inside a major cultural institution committed to public memory and human rights. She expressed the meaningfulness of becoming part of the museum's history by continuing its legacy of storytelling.



EVAN GOODMAN '28

After Innocence

This summer, Evan Goodman '28 interned with After Innocence, a national nonprofit that supports individuals who have been wrongfully convicted as they rebuild their lives after release. Unlike the Innocence Project, an organization that focuses on exonerations through DNA evidence and legal advocacy, After Innocence interacts with newly released clients, aiding them in securing basic needs such as employment, healthcare, and community resources. Evan worked remotely from Atlanta as part of the organization's small, closely coordinated team.



A major focus of her internship was the organization's annual partnership with PDS Health, a nationwide dental network that provides free dental care to communities in need during its annual "Serve Day." For many clients who spent decades in prison without access to adequate dental treatment, restoring oral health is both urgent and transformative.

Evan worked directly with clients primarily in Georgia and the broader South to arrange initial dental evaluations, find treatment plans, and match them with offices willing and able to complete all necessary procedures at no cost. The coordination of these services required substantial communication with dental offices, meticulous scheduling, and consistent follow-up with clients. Evan described the experience as a professional lesson in organization and persistence; details such as arranging transportation for clients who needed rides to appointments had to be accounted for. Ensuring that every person received the full scope of care they were eligible for meant going to great lengths.

Evan shared that one of the most meaningful parts of her internship was the deep appreciation expressed by the clients she supported. In one case, she worked closely with a mother and daughter who had been wrongfully convicted together and were both in need of significant dental work after their release. These women expressed their gratitude for Evan repeatedly during their communication, and it left a lasting impact on her. The virtual internship still managed to provide a sense of community to Evan through her client and team relationships. She had weekly meetings with the director of After Innocence, team members, and representatives from PDS Health to help the group stay aligned.

Evan also noted how meaningful it was to connect with previous CMC students who had completed the internship, and to carry on their commitment to justice for the wrongfully incarcerated. As a pre-law student, Evan would like to pursue a career addressing injustices within the U.S. incarceration system, and this experience reaffirmed her passion for this work.

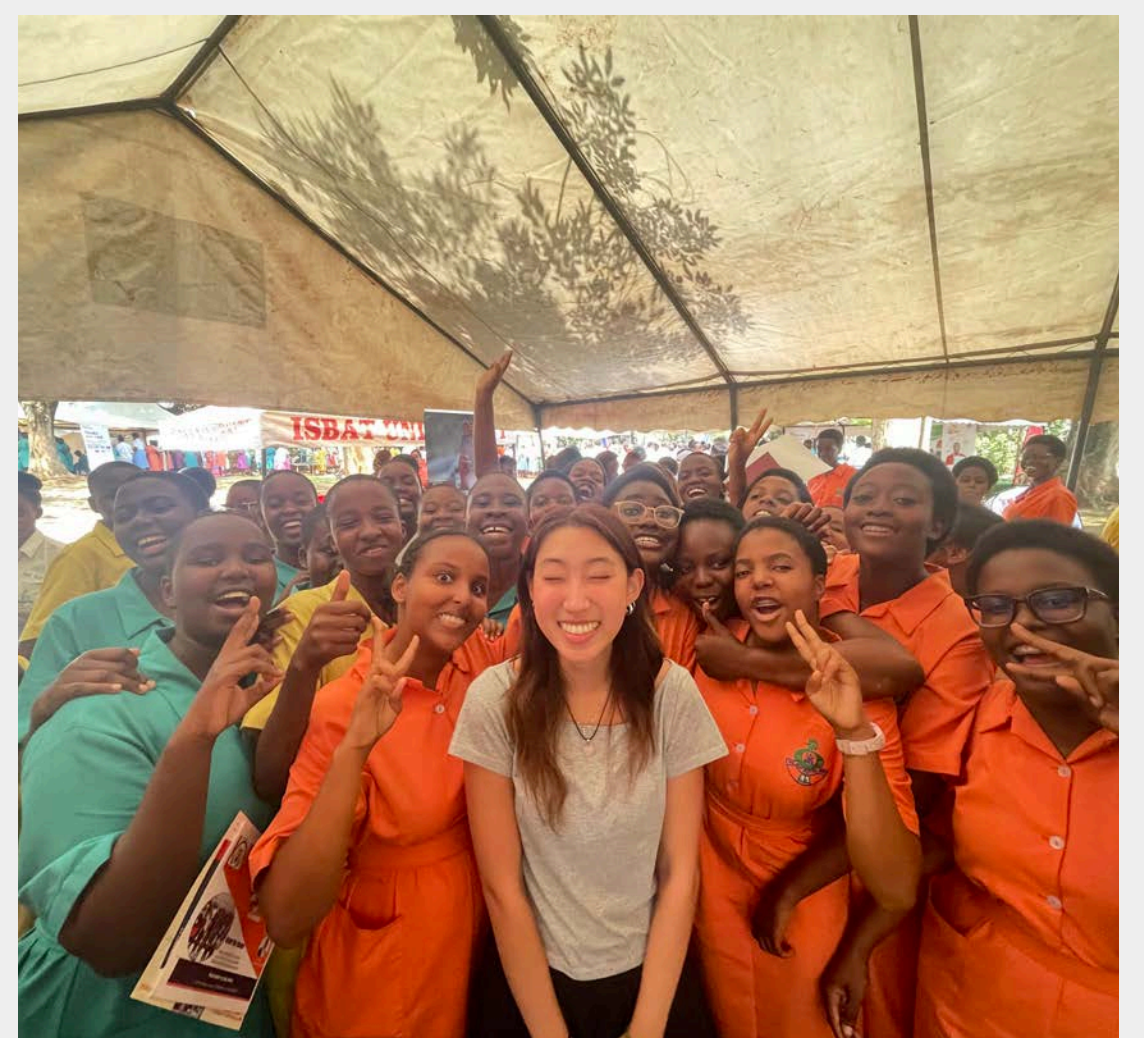
ERIN KIM '28

Musizi University

Kampala, Uganda

This past summer, Erin Kim '28 worked as a Program Strategy and Development Intern at Musizi University, a new institute in Kampala, Uganda. Originally hired to support curriculum development, Erin said yes to a last-minute change just three days before her start date: the launch of a hybrid digital museum initiative. What she thought would be a simple online project became a full proposal for an interactive space,

designed to help Ugandan youth reclaim their own narratives through digital storytelling. In addition to the museum project, Erin helped lead Musizi's Work Industry Neutral Growth Skills (WINGS) Program, creating liberal arts-based lessons in critical thinking, debate, and presentation skills for high school students across Kampala.



Her work culminated in a multi-school debate workshop, where students showcased the skills they had developed over the summer.

Erin's daily routine quickly became part of her learning experience. Each morning she took crowded public taxis into the office, spending her days in planning meetings, drafting the museum proposal, reading student applications, and preparing lesson materials. Evenings were quieter: inconsistent power forced long conversations, journaling, and reflection, moments she now misses.

She described the community she lived in as one of the most hopeful she has ever encountered, despite profound material constraints. A standout moment came at Gayaza High School, where a WINGS student asked Erin if she could share two Bible verses with her. The small gesture reshaped Erin's understanding of humility, connection, and what it means to be trusted by someone whose life circumstances differ so sharply from one's own.

This experience broadened Erin's academic and professional interests by focusing her interest in consulting on that which is rooted in public service. Erin stated that working to create a museum showed her how creative problem-solving within a mission-driven startup can intersect with human rights and community empowerment. Seeing Uganda's exam-driven education system firsthand deepened her understanding of Musizi's mission to expand access to learning, and the importance of creating spaces where youth can craft the cultural narratives they want to inherit. Now, Erin looks towards a future in consulting with the hope of not just maximizing profit for clients, but maximizing positive community impact long-term.

Erin expressed deep gratitude for both Musizi University and the Mgrublian Center for making the experience possible. To future students, she emphasizes that opportunities like this can change one's sense of purpose. "Saying yes opens new doors," Erin reflected; "doors to new careers, communities, and understanding of why public service matters."



NANDINI PATRO '28

Root Law Group

Encino, Los Angeles

This summer, Nandini Patro '28 spent two months at Root Law Group, a small but high-impact immigration law firm based in Encino, Los Angeles. Performing tasks generally entailed to a regular legal assistant or paralegal, Patro was quickly immersed in the world of immigration law, from helping file visa applications to drafting briefs for asylum

proceedings and even meeting face-to-face with clients for consultations. “Every day is honestly so unpredictable,” she says. “My tasks might have been... to file this or submit that application, but chances are there are five different problems that would come up.” What started as familiarizing herself with basic application steps quickly became independently preparing full immigration filings. The unpredictability was demanding, but also part of what made the work meaningful. “I was surprised—although it makes sense in retrospect—by how many consultations, and clients, and phones were ringing every day.” Phone lines ringing off the hook, she said, became the norm. Working during the peak of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in Los Angeles, Patro stated that the volume of calls posed a very real moment for her, bringing to life the reality of the challenges faced by asylum seekers in the U.S.

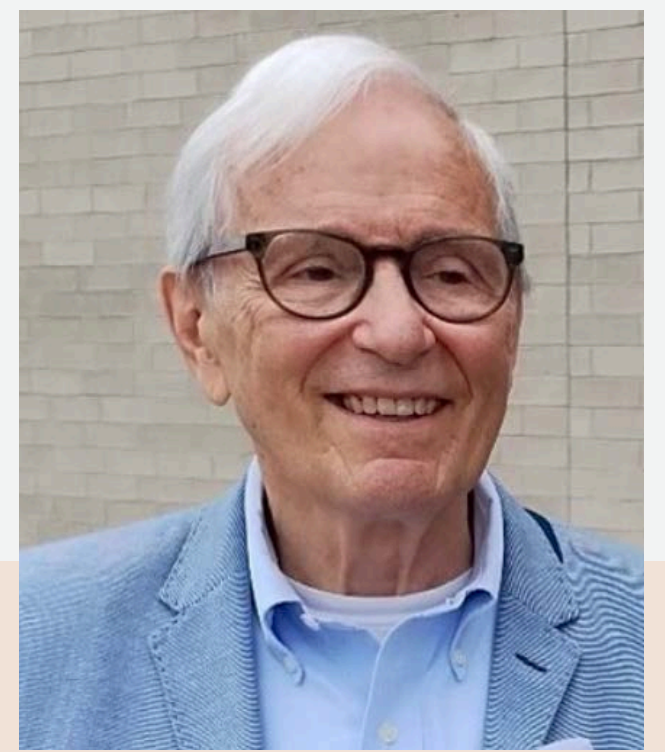


“I wanted to spend my summer doing something meaningful and have the unique opportunity to change or amplify my perspective on things I care about... to have [a] tangible effect on peoples’ lives.” That opportunity arrived most clearly through her work on asylum cases, particularly with refugees from Syria and Ukraine. One case involved a 22-year old Syrian client whose final hearing was jeopardized by documentation issues outside of his control — his papers had been seized by the Department of Homeland Security, and the hearing was set to determine whether or not he could stay in the United States. The challenge, Patro explained, is that oftentimes “home” is not stable—this client may not have been able to safely return to Syria, if that were to be the verdict. She said it was oftentimes difficult to work around as she learned the intricacies of the system, and how it sometimes felt like the system was perpetuating these problems. Both in and out of the courtroom was often laced with fear from those trying to gain asylum.

Despite the hardships, these experiences shaped Patro’s career aspirations. “I want to go into immigration law — I know that now,” Patro reflected. The internship gave her the opportunity to gain clarity on this line of work in practice, but also the understanding that even though the work is intense, it is worth pursuing. Although she encountered numerous frustrations, she said victories were equally vivid, citing instances where clients would return to the office with cake to celebrate green-card approval. She said being only 19, it was pivotal to be so immersed in the work and to both carry the responsibility and direct impact of these proceedings. She expressed that she hopes everyone has the chance to explore opportunities like hers, and that chances like these are critical not just for networking or expanding career opportunities, but for exposing yourself to real-world struggles and understanding the power even students can carry.

Joseph Saba

It's Not the Law, It's the Practice—Strategies for Human Rights Protection and Resilience



September 16, 2025 - CMC Athenaeum

A Reflection by Gabe Gardner '28 and Sadie Saba '28

Joseph P. Saba, who has worked in a variety of international capacities from Director of the Middle East & North Africa at the World Bank to Partner at Jones Day Law Firm to Chairman of the Board at Anera (American Near East Refugee Aid)—a title he still holds—came to speak at the Marian Miner Cook Atheneum for a dinner talk. Bringing first-hand experiences from Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza, Saba discussed the struggles currently faced by International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and how the seemingly relentless attacks on these frameworks have impacted millions of people across the globe.



Saba's presentation was striking, with a balance of the history of IHRL, modern day articles that have failed to be invoked, clear differentiation between IHRL and International Humanitarian Law, and personal anecdotes from his time in conflict zones. Saba began by providing a timeline on the development of IHRL, and then segued into discussing their key architectures, including the concepts of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. He discussed the scope of its reach, and then provided examples of Conventions that have or have not been ratified by certain states — such as the notably lacking ratification of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance by the US, UK, Russia, and other large nations. After laying the theoretical and legal baseline, Saba began to discuss what enforceability of IHRL looks like in practice, and what responsibilities are carried by a state, including provision of housing, humanitarian relief access, and family unity. He also differentiated between refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.

To provide a real-world lens to the legal framework, Saba shared photographs and anecdotes of his time in the MENA region. He began by referencing his time in Southern Iraq during the First Gulf War, telling the story of Iraqis he met who had been displaced and were desperately searching for water. He showed photographs he had taken of crises in Yemen, the Eritrean Ethiopian Tigray, and along the Syria-Lebanon border. To drive home the importance of understanding the living conditions the displaced encounter, he told a story of a time in South Sudan, North of Bor, where he interacted with a mother worried about the welfare of her children and curious how she could get access to a cellphone. In order to circle back to the systemic legal issues within IHRL, he discussed the challenges that arise with lack of access to documentation, including restrictions on freedom of movement, risk of abuse, and arrest and detention. This was concluded with an overview of recent work done by Anera in Lebanon, Jordan, and Gaza and the West Bank, focused on long term sustainability and including projects such as emergency relief aid, development of youth training programs, and construction of schools.



Despite the difficulties and atrocities Saba had to discuss, he conveyed a strong passion for the line of work and the importance of paying attention to the news. He argued that the sustainability of IHRL starts with each individual, and emphasized the impact people can have through open conversations, donations, volunteer work, and keeping one's eyes open. According to Saba, meaningful change begins at the on-the-ground level, and it is important to recognize shared humanity and dignity. Saba's Ath Talk offered students an opportunity to engage with a complex topic on a simplified, digestible scale — coupling complicated legal frameworks with real-world stories. The event highlighted how even international systems have their weaknesses, and the importance of maintaining international human rights for all.

The Watchtower

PODCAST

SEASON 3

This semester, the Watchtower Podcast has featured a series of conversations with guests whose work addresses questions of justice, identity, law, and public policy. Our most recent episodes highlight three important voices: Joe Saba, William Menard '09, and Christina Carney. Each speaker offers a distinct perspective while reinforcing the podcast's commitment to thoughtful, human centered dialogue.

Joe Saba joined the podcast to discuss post conflict governance and development. Drawing on years of experience in international reconstruction, he explained the challenges that arise when countries attempt to build stable institutions after crisis. Saba emphasized the importance of local leadership, institutional legitimacy, and broad based participation in policymaking. His episode provides listeners with a clear and grounded understanding of the difficult work required to create resilient governance structures in fragile states.

William Menard '09 shifted the conversation to domestic policy through his discussion of the United States immigration system. As an immigration attorney, he described the realities of navigating a legal framework defined by procedural hurdles, inconsistent implementation, and significant human stakes. Menard highlighted how access to legal representation can shape outcomes for individuals and families, and he explained how policy shifts translate into lived experiences. His episode offers an accessible look at the day to day workings of immigration law and the urgent need for structural reform.

Christina Carney brought a scholarly perspective rooted in Black Studies, gender and sexuality studies, and the history of race and policing. Carney's research focuses on Black sexual economies, carceral systems, and the social structures that shape the lives of Black women. Her recent work, including her book *Disreputable Women: Black Sex Economies and the Making of San Diego*, examines how race, gender, labor, and criminalization intersect in both historical and contemporary contexts. Her episode encourages listeners to consider how knowledge production, public narratives, and institutional power shape understandings of identity and justice.

Together, these three episodes reflect the Watchtower Podcast's ongoing mission to elevate rigorous and human focused conversations. By bringing together practitioners, scholars, and advocates, the podcast continues to explore the systems that shape public life and the experiences of individuals within those systems. More episodes will be released throughout the academic year, featuring additional voices from law, public policy, scholarship, and activism.



The Watchtower episodes are live on Spotify

William Menard '09

Immigration: The Latest Battle for Civil Rights in America

October 21, 2025 - CMC Athenaeum

A Reflection by Gabe Gardner '28 and Sadie Saba '28

Immigration attorney William Menard '09 delivered a timely and deeply informative lecture on the realities, and brutality, of the U.S. immigration system and the human consequences of policy decisions. Drawing on years of experience representing clients across the country, Menard provided students with a clear explanation of how immigration law functions in practice, while also emphasizing the structural barriers that shape the outcomes for millions of people.



William Menard '09

Menard began by outlining the fundamental architecture of the immigration system, noting that it is simultaneously both vast and fragmented. He explained how overlapping statutes, shifting administrative agendas, and significant discretion at nearly every level make the process highly unpredictable and volatile for applicants and attorneys alike. This unpredictability, he argued, is not simply an inconvenience, but one of the central features that determines whether or not individuals are able to secure legal status, reunite with family members, or remain safely in the United States.

Throughout the talk, Menard illustrated these dynamics through providing real case examples from his legal practice. Without sensationalizing or disclosing identifying details, he described clients who faced years-long delays, sudden and unexpected changes in eligibility, or inconsistent treatment depending on which office or officer handled their case. These examples made clear that immigration law is not merely a policy area debated in Washington, but a system that profoundly shapes the lives of those attempting to navigate it.



Prior to his main room dinner presentation, Menard met with a small group of students, faculty and guests of the Center to share more about his background since graduating from CMC and for in-depth conversation about the intricacies of practicing immigration law.

A major theme of Menard's lecture was the imbalance between the complexity of the law and the limited access to legal representation. He highlighted the reality that many immigrants must face removal proceedings or even pursue relief without an attorney, forcing them to navigate dense legal requirements that even trained practitioners find challenging. Menard noted that this structural gap often leads to easily preventable harms and contributes heavily to inequitable outcomes, especially for asylum seekers and low-income migrants.

He also discussed recent policy developments, including shifts in enforcement priorities, backlogs in asylum processing, and the ongoing debate over humanitarian parole programs. Menard further emphasized that these changes do not occur in isolation. Each policy adjustment has cascading effects on courts, community organizations, and families who depend on clarity and consistency to plan their futures.

Despite the difficulties he outlined, Menard conveyed a strong sense of purpose about the work. He closed by stressing the importance of legal advocacy, community support networks, and rigorous public discourse. According to Menard, meaningful reform requires not only statutory change but also a broader recognition of immigrants' contributions, lived experiences, and human dignity.

His Athenaeum talk offered students a rare opportunity to hear directly from a practitioner working on the front lines of immigration law. The event underscored how legal systems reflect national priorities, and how the pursuit of justice in this field requires both expertise and a commitment to the people most affected by its shortcomings. The Watchtower podcast's episode interviewing Mr. Menard is live on Spotify.



The Center looks forward to welcoming William Menard back to campus in the spring of 2026 for an Immigration Law Clinic he is helping to lead through the Center's Immigration Law Research cluster program this year. The clinic will take place on February 13th and will include additional CMC alumni, legal practitioners, faculty, and student participants.

TRUMP’S “GARBAGE” POLITICS HAVE A NAME

Trump’s dehumanizing attack on Somalis is a warning about who this country is willing to cast out of “We the People.”

By Aadil Mohamed ‘26

A few weeks ago, the president of the United States sat at the head of a Cabinet table and called people like me – Somali Americans, a small, visible, overwhelmingly lawful community living in places like Minneapolis, Columbus, Seattle, and even Fargo – “garbage.”

Our country, he said, “stinks.” We “contribute nothing.” We “do nothing but complain.” When he finished, his vice president, J.D. Vance, banged the table in encouragement.

When a president looks into the cameras and calls an entire community of citizens “garbage,” the question is no longer whether he means it. Of course he does. The question is whether everyone else – courts, universities, city councils, business leaders, voters – is prepared to live with it.

For years, Americans have argued about whether this kind of rhetoric is just Trump being Trump or something darker. At a certain point, the argument becomes an evasion. A president who divides the country into “real” Americans and internal enemies; who treats loyalty to himself as more important than the law; who turns public contempt for a targeted group into a recurring spectacle – that is no mystery. We have a word for that style of politics: fascism.

By fascism, I mean a politics organized around the boundary between “the people” and their enemies, in which legal constraints vanish when they stand in the way, and in which public cruelty toward the despised becomes a kind of founding ritual. That is what we are watching.

The “garbage” remark fits the pattern perfectly. It draws a bright line between the “we” the president claims to represent and the “they” he blames for the country’s problems. It casts a set of citizens as pollutants, not neighbors.

This picture bears no resemblance to the actual Somali presence in the United States. Most of us are not recent border crossers. We came as refugees, as children, as family reunification cases. Over time, we did what this country says it wants immigrants to do. We became permanent residents and citizens, with some of the highest naturalization rates of any refugee group. Our names are on voter rolls, property records, and business licenses.



President Trump showing reporters a sheet of paper with a photo of Representative Ilhan Omar. (Credit: The New York Times)

Our labor shows up in warehouses and factories, in nursing homes and hospitals. We pay state and federal taxes that help fund the very Cabinet agencies now being repurposed to target our neighborhoods.

If this story sounds familiar, it should. Every large immigrant wave in American history has heard some version of “you do not belong.” Each time, the country later admitted it had gone too far.

What is different now is that none of this can be written off as ignorance. We know how dehumanizing language has been used before, and who paid the price. And still, with that knowledge, we are watching a president talk about a Black Muslim community in language that comes straight out of that playbook.

For Somalis, the message is unmistakable. When the president calls your community “garbage,” he is telling you that your rights are contingent – that your safety depends not on the Constitution, but on his mood and the calculations of people around him.

Fascism does not succeed because one man talks like a fascist. It succeeds when neighbors who know better stay quiet at work so as not to start an argument.

There is nothing especially complicated about the moral test here. You do not need a degree in political science to know that calling an entire community “garbage” is wrong. Trump’s words were disgusting. More importantly, they were clarifying. They tell us exactly how he understands power: not as a responsibility to protect all citizens, but as the right to decide which citizens are worth protecting at all.

That is the test in front of us. It is as large as our future as a republic.

THE FORGOTTEN DRUZE: SYRIA'S OVERLOOKED VICTIMS

The Druze of Syria stand on the brink of erasure, as their endurance is met with global silence.

By Rachel Svoyskiy '26

The Druze of Syria face a crisis that the world refuses to see. Located primarily in the Suwayda region in South Syria, this small religious minority has survived for centuries by maintaining a delicate balance in a region defined by sectarian violence and shifting empires. The Druze faith is an independent monotheistic religion with a distinct theology that emphasizes loyalty to the community, ethical living, and cautious engagement with the outside world. Throughout history, the Druze have resiliently protected their culture and their people, often standing alone against overwhelming odds. Today, their resilience is being tested once again.

More than a decade of Assad's rule and the Syrian Civil War have left Syria deeply fractured. The Druze find themselves caught between a weakened central government, rival armed groups, and regional actors with conflicting agendas. In mid-July 2025, government and affiliated forces extrajudicially executed 46 Druze men and women in Suwayda, targeting homes, a school, a hospital, and public spaces. But the killings were only one instance in a wider crisis. Weeks of clashes between Druze militias, Bedouin tribes, and government forces killed hundreds and displaced more than 160,000 people in July alone. UN experts documented that 105 Druze women and girls were abducted, some subjected to sexual violence, and many remain missing.

At the same time, power, water, and telecommunications collapsed across much of Sweida city, while hospitals struggled to function under bombardment. For weeks, the main highway to Damascus was blocked, cutting off aid deliveries until late August when U.N. trucks finally gained access. Local Druze factions have mobilized to defend their communities with the newly formed Druze-led National Guard and smaller militias in Jaramana, yet they face threats far beyond what these groups can handle. The international response has been minimal.

Israel has stepped in, delivering 10,000 aid packages in March, offering medical treatment, and granting limited work permits in the Golan Heights. Meanwhile, the United Nations and humanitarian organizations have provided critical, but limited assistance (including convoys delivering food, water, and medical supplies to tens of thousands in Suwayda and surrounding areas).

This neglect is not a minor oversight; it is a moral failure. When governments and international institutions refuse to act, they set a dangerous precedent: small communities can be erased with impunity.



The Druze, whose history is intertwined with the survival of pluralism in the Middle East, now risk being slowly erased. Their prayer houses and religious sanctuaries, schools, and cultural traditions face destruction. Their children grow up amid violence, and their elders witness neighbors who had lived alongside them for generations disappear or be displaced. The Druze do not merely suffer quietly; they organize, resist, and survive. But survival alone is not enough. Without consistent international attention and aid, centuries of culture and community could vanish.

There are actions that can be taken. Humanitarian aid must reach the most vulnerable. Those committing violence must face accountability. International actors must document abuses, amplify voices, and exert pressure on regional powers to protect minority communities. The Druze are not asking for intervention to fight their wars. They are demanding international recognition of what has happened in Suwayda, support in the form of humanitarian access and legal protection, and guarantees that future abuses, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and sexual violence will be investigated and punished so they might live without fear.

The story of the Druze is a reminder of the human cost of indifference. Their faith and culture have faced relentless challenges, yet endurance alone cannot protect a people from being erased. The international community stands at a crossroad; it can choose to uphold justice, human dignity, and the protection of minorities, or remain complicit through silence. The Druze do not seek intervention in their conflicts, but demand recognition, peace, and solidarity. Their survival is more than a humanitarian issue. It is a call to honor a people deeply rooted in the Middle East. The future of their legacy rests on the world's commitment today.

Rachel Svoyskiy is a Senior at CMC majoring in Economics and Government and the Human Rights Sequence.

HIGHLIGHTING BOARD MEMBER VOICES: ALAN FENNING '72



Interview by Gabe Gardner '28

When Alan Fenning first arrived at Claremont McKenna College in the late 1960s, the world around him was erupting. The Vietnam War, the draft lottery, and the Kent State shootings shook campuses across the country, including the Claremont Colleges. “CMC erupted into protest,” he recalls, “I was involved in sit-ins [outside the president’s office] in Bauer Hall. We were warned we’d be arrested if we didn’t leave.” The turbulence that defined the years 1968 to 1970 shaped him early, and sharpened a lifelong awareness of violence, human rights violations, and political responsibility.

Initially a government major, Fenning quickly determined that the department’s conservative leaning was not the right fit, and he shifted to philosophy. But his interest in politics never faded. His intellectual turning point came from Professor John Roth, Edward J. Sexton Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, who offered both mentorship and tough love in equal measure. Roth’s sharp feedback urged him to dig deeper and helped him to move beyond “getting by on basic ability” and to cultivate the rigor that was later the foundation for Fenning’s legal career and professional path.

Unsure of his direction following graduation, Fenning took a chance on law school at the University of California, Berkeley. There he discovered that the analytical training philosophy offered made legal reasoning intuitive and natural. “Every word matters,” he says; that the precision he mastered at Claremont McKenna defined his work for decades. Fenning’s career took shape in the emerging world, and subsequent discourse, of renewable energy. His environmental awareness began early in his childhood, growing up in water-rationed San Bernardino, California. After trying litigation and traditional firm work, he realized he preferred building deals rather than fighting over them. This clarity led him in-house to work on research and development projects, including wind and solar technologies, at Southern California Edison, which was the same company that once funded his CMC scholarship.

His role at Edison soon expanded to the global scene. One early memorable moment came in Japan in 1982, where days of stagnant talk shifted after the opposing delegation unexpectedly switched to an aggressive American negotiation style. Fenning, in response, matched their energy, but with diplomacy and force in equal measure, leading to a deal being reached that same night. It was a defining experience in cross-cultural leadership. He went on to become the senior vice president and general counsel of a sister company to Edison developing power projects world-wide many using alternative and renewable technologies. Fenning traveled widely, and having returned to law firm practice later in his career, he did groundbreaking work for the international consortium developing the first wholly foreign-owned power project in China. Alongside his professional life, the Jewish principle of *tikkun olam*, or repairing the world, has been a guiding principle in Fenning’s deep commitment to community service. Born just five years after World War II, he grew up in a Jewish community where the trauma of the Holocaust was ever-present. That awareness shaped his understanding of responsible leadership, borders, and belonging.

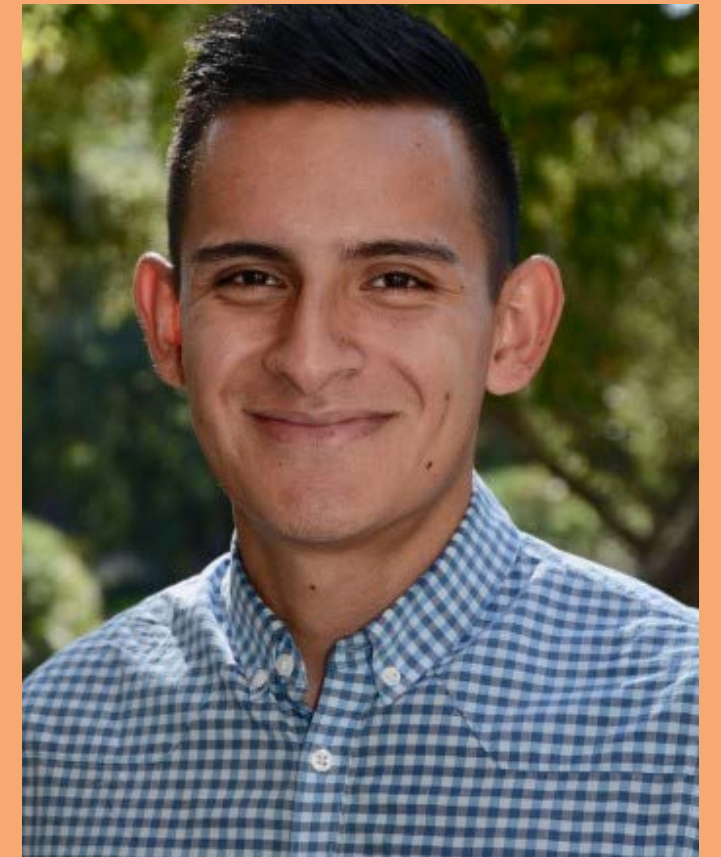
More recently, he and his wife opened their home to a refugee family from Afghanistan and have supported other Afghani and Ukrainian refugees. “What this experience brought home to me was how much refugees give up,” he reflects, “they lose their entire life. It’s gone.” Watching a highly trained Afghan professional, who was the head of anesthesiology at a hospital in Kabul, restart from scratch underscored for him the depth of their sacrifice and resilience in their pursuit of a better future. Following the 2016 election, Fenning became deeply involved in the Democratic Party’s organizing, helping elect candidates who shared his values. “Civic engagement,” he believes, “is one essential avenue of repairing the world.” Today, Fenning is energized by the Mgrublian Center’s next chapter as the Chair of the Advisory Board. His advice to current CMC students reflects his life’s journey: stay intellectually curious, commit to service, and pursue the work that allows you to make the most meaningful impact. His own path, he says, has shown that meaning comes from both professional excellence and a willingness to serve others.

PROFESSOR RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT:

Cesar Vargas Nunez: *Shared Experience and Public Policy: The Intersection of Immigration and Public Health*

By Evan Goodman '28

The fields of political science, public health, and sociology sit at a complex intersection that can be studied to reveal the decisions of society by providing specific public services to various groups of people. Professor Cesar Vargas Nunez's work looks into the intersection between the three disciplines to help more clearly define what prohibits immigrants from getting access to the public health resources they need in many cases. His research also highlights the importance of recognizing the universal qualities we all share, helping emphasize the positive impacts that arise when public policy centers on our shared humanity.



Professor Cesar Vargas Nunez

Professor Vargas Nunez is concluding his third semester at CMC, where he teaches in the Government department. While the main course he teaches is *Introduction to American Politics*, he has also taught *Immigration Policy* and will be teaching *Empirical Methods* in the spring. Professor Vargas Nunez earned his bachelor's degree in Political Science at Pitzer College and then went on to complete research on health disparities on the undocumented population in Spain. Through this experience and the time following, working with the San Diego State Research Foundation, he first gained insights and exposure to the intersection of healthcare and its relations to people of different backgrounds. It was during this time that he made key findings about the positive implications that providing patients with healthcare information in their own language could have on reducing their chances of being readmitted due to the same issue. These initial research opportunities eventually led him to Stanford, where he completed his PhD in Political Science and additionally narrowed his focus to looking into the combination of immigration with healthcare and welfare resource access. As Professor Vargas Nunez continues to explore questions within these fields, he notes that his research is grounded in his own "lived experiences". Growing up as part of an immigrant family, he has been able to see "how [various] policies pan out on the ground", a perspective that continues to influence and guide his research.

In recent years, Professor Vargas Nunez explained how the pandemic held significant implications for his research. As he attempts to draw out and acknowledge universal qualities we all share, the pandemic drew a significant correlation between the unauthorized immigrant population and the healthcare system as it "exposed everyone to the close knit interaction between who gets access to a vaccine can have profound implications".

The pandemic created a unique window because people who had “lived experiences with Covid” were more supportive of “giving access to healthcare programs” to immigrants. It was on this basis that he argues that if there are people “getting sick, if there's a need, if there is a pressing public health concern, that people will demand services” towards the issue which in turn holds public officials accountable to facilitate. The pandemic showed that when we set aside our differences and focus on common experiences, elected officials and government agencies are more likely to respond to the population’s needs, especially as more citizens demand services that support everyone, regardless of background.

In addition to the foundation of his research beginning to draw out the value of highlighting shared experiences, Professor Vargas Nunez still continues to grapple with how to get unauthorized immigrants the proper access to welfare services they deserve and need. As previously mentioned, his research sits at the intersection between public health, political science and sociology, with each discipline allowing for its own additional benefit as he investigates policy progressions regarding unauthorized immigrants. Sociology is especially interesting because it allows him to recognize that immigrant communities are not a bubble isolated from the rest of society and in turn evaluate the “downstream consequences” of policies being drawn that exclude people of various immigration statuses. When it comes to the political science aspect, Professor Vargas Nunez recognizes that immigration policy as a whole is often so dense that it is difficult for ordinary citizens to understand and relate to why unauthorized immigrants don’t just change their legal status. This is one aspect that can create a barrier within his research approach of using universal experience for good, so he continues to try to tackle how to deliver current immigration policies in a digestible manner to others.

In addition to the challenges created by public perceptions of current immigration laws, issues surrounding healthcare access also raise important questions about what healthcare services unauthorized immigrants are able to turn to in times of need. This question proves more complex than it initially appears. He explains that although unauthorized immigrants technically have access to emergency rooms, his research shows that the possibility of encountering immigration enforcement often leads them to make “strategic decisions” and, in many cases, avoid seeking the care they need. Under the current administration, with more stringent immigration policies, this is a prominent direction of his current research. Overall, Professor Vargas Nunez continues to integrate the three disciplines to produce rigorous research on the present conditions facing unauthorized immigrants and their efforts to access healthcare services, while also serving as a dedicated advocate on their behalf. He continues to develop his approach of highlighting “shared experiences [...] to look beyond the prejudice that may be driving the opposition”. In doing so, Professor Vargas Nunez’s work not only advances our understanding of immigration and public health, but also reinforces the power of shared experiences in creating more compassionate and effective public policy.

TASK FORCE UPDATES

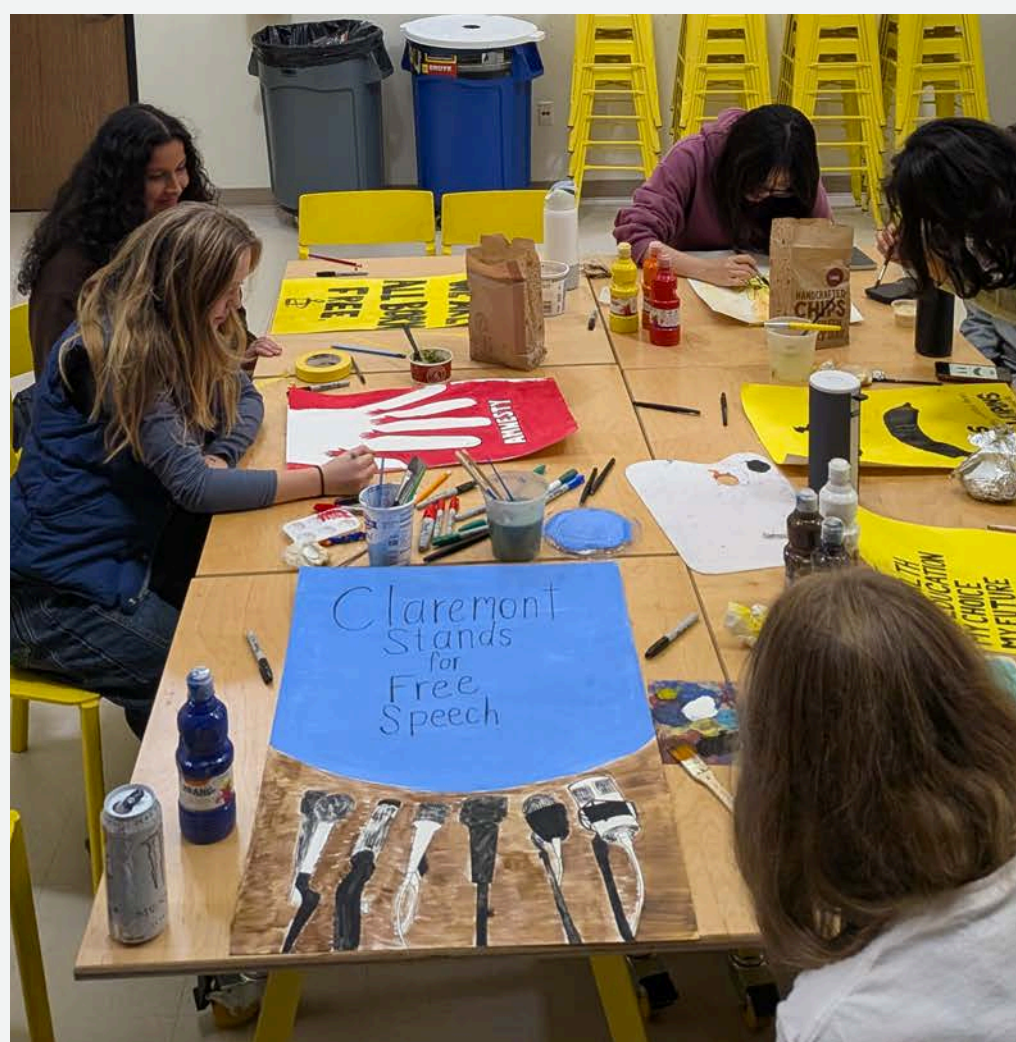
Student-led human rights task forces address current national and global human rights problems and are a great way for students to be involved with the Center on a volunteer-basis and to focus on a human rights topic or campaign of their choosing. Below is an update from some of the task force groups and events they organized during fall of 2025.

Amnesty International

The Amnesty International Task Force had an energetic fall semester with a special commitment to growth, diversity, and retention across the 5Cs. They organized several pop-up tabling events on other campuses, forming a broad network of passionate student activists. In October, three leaders attended the Amnesty International USA Western Regional Conference in Berkeley, California. They have continued to advocate for human rights cases domestically and abroad, most recently through a collaborative paint night at the Hive, Pomona College's student fine arts studio.

Special Recognition: A sincere shoutout to Amnesty International's 2025-2026 leadership team: Co-presidents Davin Khan '28 and Abby Niquette '28, VP of Events Adeline McKenzie '29, VP of Digital Media Zinnia Khan '29, VP of Public Relations Lauren Love '29, and VP of Events Aveeva Mirchandani '29! Your work has been critical to the impressive progress this semester! We look forward to welcoming back former President Ambika Gupta '27 in the spring from her study abroad experience in South Africa.

Keep an eye on their work as they continue to champion important human rights cases in the semesters ahead. Follow @amnesty.claremont on Instagram or contact Adeline McKenzie to be added to their email list!

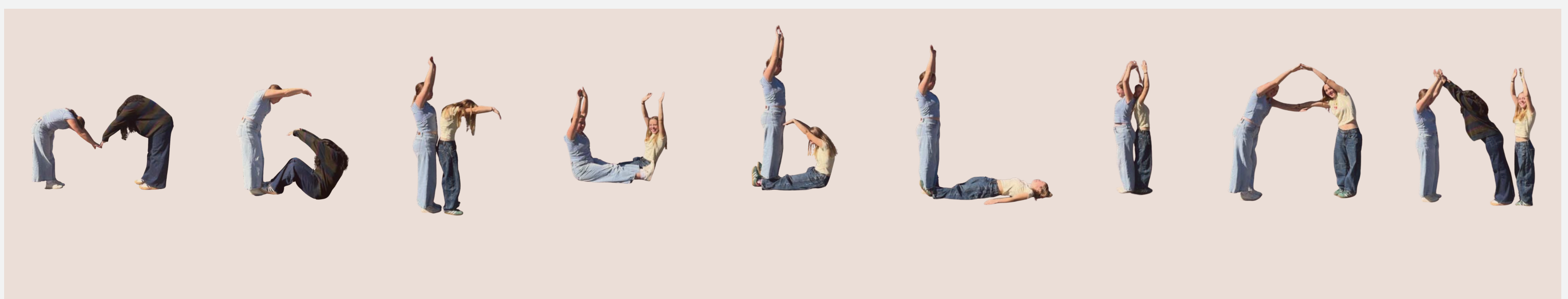




From October 17-19, three of our leaders—Abby Niquette, Zinnia Khan, and Adeline McKenzie—traveled up to Berkeley, California to attend **Amnesty International's Western Regional Conference**. They interacted with dozens of fellow student leaders and activists; participated in organizational governance; listened to panels discussing threats to the democratic order, U.S. immigration and detention, and crises facing various marginalized identities; and spoke with Amnesty's country specialists about their ongoing work.



Abby, Zinnia, and Adeline noted that the most influential parts of the conference experience were interacting with student activists and listening to the panelists. It was inspiring to hear from fellow college students about their projects and events as well as shared human rights passions. Some of the panelists were lawyers with direct, on-the-ground experience working in conflict zones or along borders. Their emotional storytelling was captivating, exemplifying the value of narrative as a human rights machine. A sincere thank you to the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights and Amnesty USA for sponsoring this conference trip.



Created by Abby, Zinnia, and Adeline in San Francisco, CA

Curis

Curis is a public health and global poverty task force on campus. Translated from Latin, "Cura Personalis" means care for the entire person; in Curis, our mission is to help improve access to care for people around the world. Each year we focus on a new topic and arrange speakers, educational events, movie screenings, and volunteering opportunities within the local community in accordance with this topic. Follow us on Instagram: @Claremont.Curis.

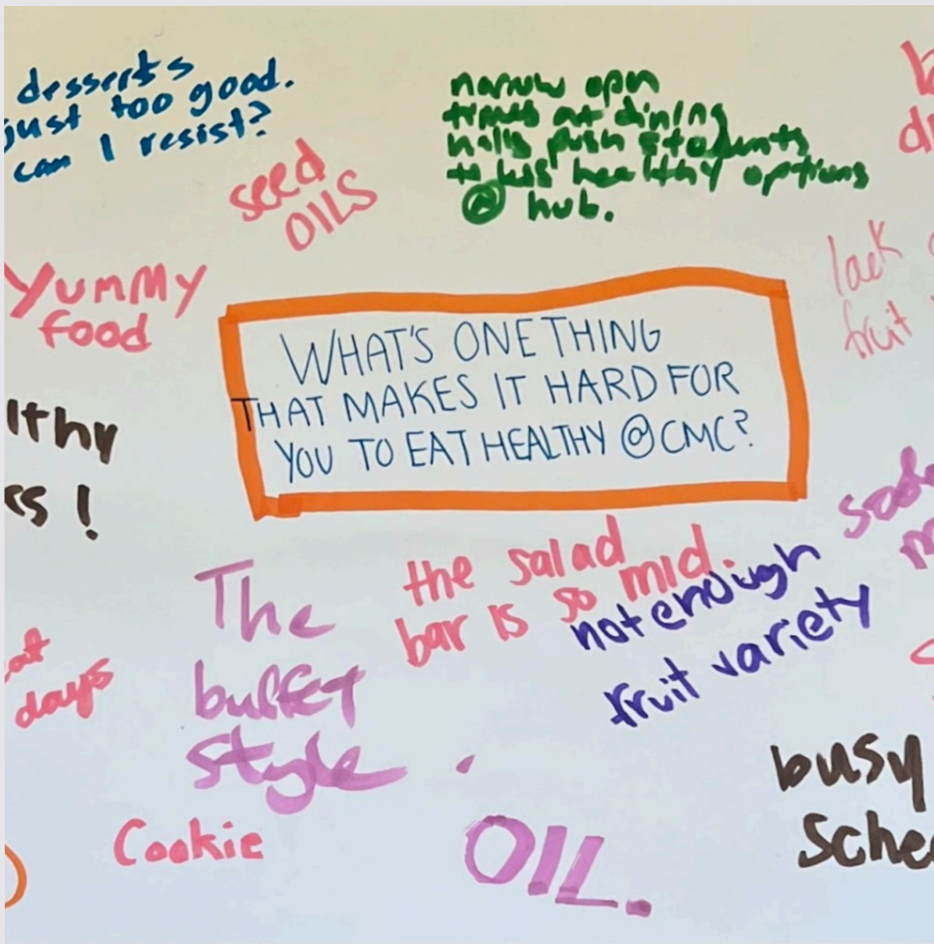
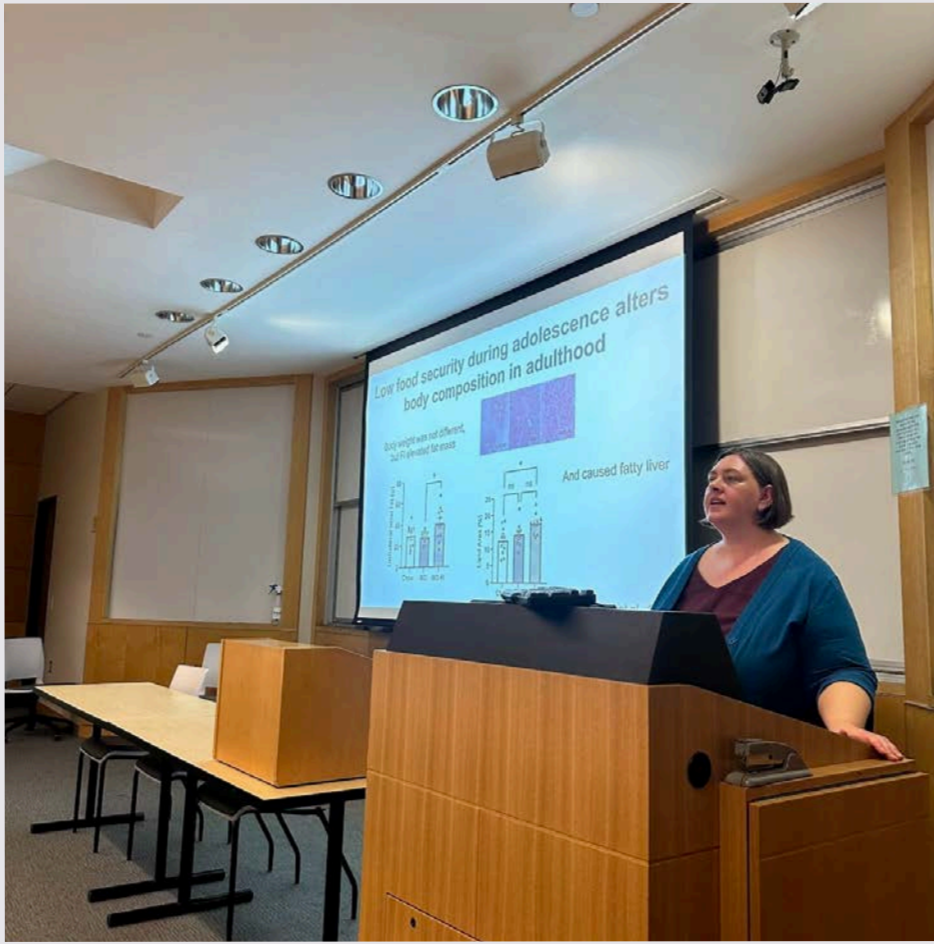
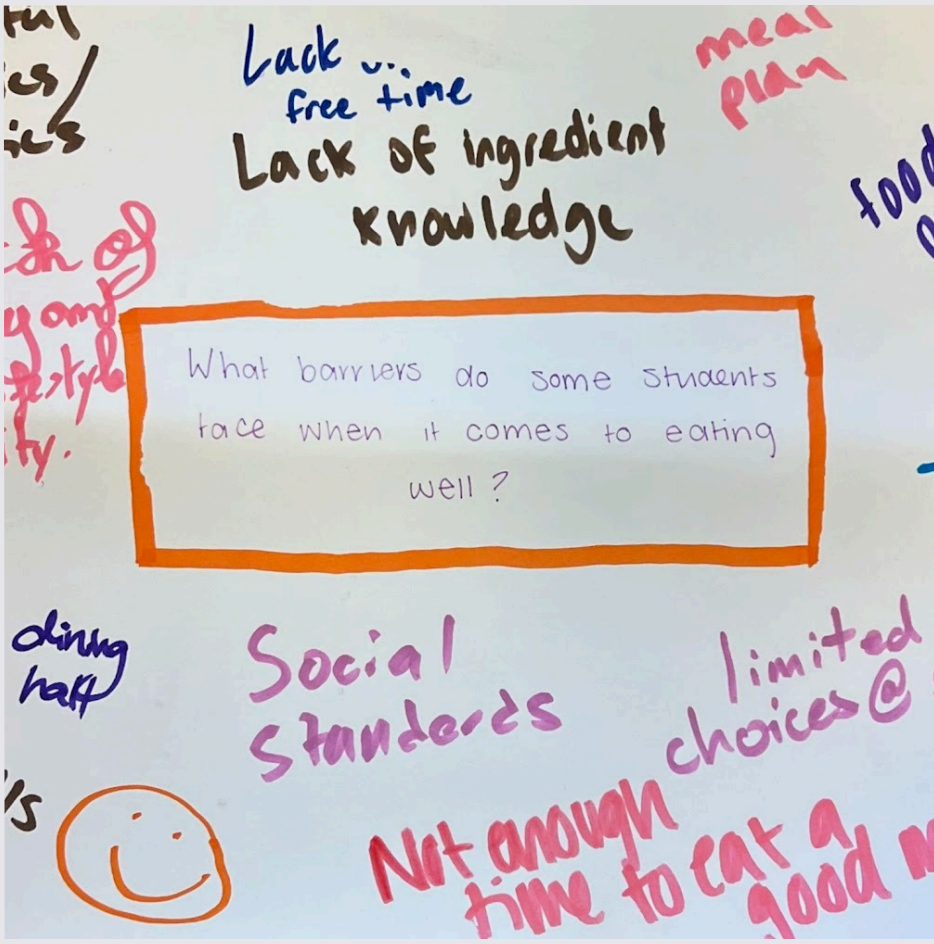
For 2025-26, our student leaders are Annabelle Thun CMC '28, Sheza Shafi CMC '28, Martina Bernheim CMC '28, Donovan Freed PZ '28, and Jonathan Zhang CMC '28. This year's leadership team's interest in food security was sparked by their passion for medicine and science, as many are involved in the Integrated Sciences department, conducting scientific research in many fields.

Curis hosts many events focusing on student audiences with whom we encourage discussion and reflection about the meaning of health, nutrition, and access to food security.

"We tabled outside Collins to connect with students and faculty before our speaker event. We provided boba that students could take after responding to one of our interactive questions regarding nutrition and food equity. We were very excited by the fact that so many students have great insight into nutrition and were eager to learn more." - Annabelle Thun CMC '28

As well, the team hosted a talk with Professor Diana Williams from the Kravis Department of Integrated Sciences, who presented on the biological impacts of food insecurity. She explained that "food insecurity due to poverty is common in the U.S. and across the globe. Healthy physical development depends on good nutrition, so food insecurity in childhood can have lifelong consequences, and even adults who experience food insecurity have increased risk for metabolic disease. This presentation explained some of the biology of energy balance, discussed how this is disrupted in situations of low food security, and described recent research aimed at understanding the mechanisms for these long-term adverse health consequences."

The presentation was followed by a meaningful discussion in which Professor Williams addressed questions about the nuances of the biological processes involved. The event drew a strong turnout, and many students expressed interest in her research.



Students Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation (SACSE)

Students Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation (SACSE) is committed to ending gender-based violence through combating exploitation in the sex trade. Sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation predominantly affect women and the most systemically marginalized groups in the United States. Engage with our work through learning more about the commercial sex trade and what you can do to combat the exploitation within it.

Current leadership includes Vivienne Arndt (CMC '28) and Macy Puckett (Scripps '28) co-presidents. Carys Hardy (Scripps '28) is Media and Marketing Head. Other students are taskforces members and assist with event planning and outreach efforts.

In the fall '25 semester, SACSE was active and engaged on campus. They hosted their Sex Trafficking 101 event in September where attendees were able to learn more about the aspects of the sex trade. SACSE hosted the event at the Motely Coffeehouse and over twenty 5C students attended.



SACSE also hosted documentary screenings, including the National Geographic film *Pimps and Undercover Cops* with Mariana Van Zeller, which investigates the business of illicit sex in America and offers powerful insight into sexual violence and the real stories of prostituted people.

This semester, SACSE brought in guest speaker Liz Stein, an anti-trafficking advocate and Epstein Survivor. The presentation was attended by over fifty-five students, interested in learning more about the issue of sex trafficking, a topic present in today's current events and discussion of human rights and its intersection with the sex trade.

Liz Stein spoke on the issue of sex trafficking and politics and the recent effort on Capitol Hill calling for the release of the Epstein Files. Students at the event had the chance to hear Stein's story, rethink their own misconceptions about the sex trade, and think of ways they could be advocates for these issues in their own lives.

SACSE has additional programming planned for the spring 2026 semester, stay tuned! Follow us on Instagram! @sacse_25

Prison Education Program (PEP)

The Prison Education Project (PEP) continues its work to expand access to high-quality education for incarcerated people while advancing broader advocacy against mass incarceration, in California and across the United States.

This year, PEP offers five courses: three taught fully in person at the California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) and two taught to juvenile students primarily over Zoom. Instructor Evan Sevaly '26, who began teaching in juvenile detention centers along with other students, emphasized how central trust is to meaningful instruction—and how difficult it is to cultivate in a prison environment defined by surveillance and restriction. Teaching over Zoom only amplified those barriers. As Sevaly put it, “Prison Education provides an opportunity to carve out liberatory systems in an otherwise oppressive structure.” According to Sevaly, such barriers are part of what influences PEP to expand their advocacy outside teaching, and develop working groups to advocate for an end to mass incarceration.



PEP has launched three advocacy-based working groups: the Media Outreach Group, a Letter-Writing Group, and a Lobbying group working with Democracy behind Bars. The Media Outreach Group is making strides in publishing articles in the *The Student Life (TSL)* and other student newspapers, spreading the work about efforts against mass incarceration. Most recently, they have produced an op-ed on why the closure of CRC represents progress for decarceration efforts. The letter-writing campaign has partnered with Critical Resistance, a coalition to stop jail construction in LA County. PEP has been reaching out to incarcerated individuals with the intention of putting them at the forefront of mass incarceration advocacy. By facilitating opportunities for incarcerated people to participate in advocacy, and working with Critical Resistance, PEP hopes to effectively advocate for an end to mass incarceration. Lastly, PEP's Lobbyist working group has collaborated with Democracy Behind Bars on voting rights expansion and efforts to encourage CA Governor Gavin Newsom to increase the use of clemency.

Evan Sevaly has stated that while Claremont McKenna College students often gravitate toward the tangible immediacy of classroom teaching, recruitment for sustained advocacy remains a challenge. Strengthening these groups and expanding student engagement will be a central focus next semester. Looking ahead, PEP will continue in-person teaching at CRC, deepen its advocacy initiatives, and build on a shared commitment to creating liberatory spaces—even within systems designed to constrain them.

HIGHLIGHTING BOARD MEMBER VOICES: JUNE BAYHA '94



Interview by Kevin Wang '27

How did your background and education lead you to human rights?

I have always been interested in education since I was a child. My family immigrated from Hong Kong for education, and I remember hearing my mother's stories working with the Salvation Army to build childcare centers in Hong Kong for refugee children. I grew up in an environment where access to high-quality education was valued. When I was at CMC, I majored in history and government and wrote my senior thesis about the history of public education and the American dream, which I think are inherently tied to each other. I did not at first think of education as a human right, as I do not think I knew that concept back then. However, if education is something that everyone should have, that makes it a right, doesn't it?

Are there other people or experiences at CMC or otherwise that shaped your interest in human rights?

Professor John Roth was my mentor, thesis advisor, and the person who cofounded the Mgrublian Center. I took many of his classes, including one on perspectives on the American dream. He had us write essays or everything that we read, and it helped me reflect on who I am and what kind of person I want to be.

Of the initiatives that you have been involved in, which ones are you passionate about the most?

In the early 2000s, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger put together legislation to bring back hands-on work experience classes. For seven years, I was a statewide evaluator at WestEd, and I put together reports advising the governor and the California State Legislature on whether to keep funding this initiative. It was nice to know they reauthorized some of the legislation, because it shows they read our reports. After I started my own company, I worked directly with young people to use grant funding to help high schoolers gain work experience. CMC likes to talk about learning by doing, and I have been a big proponent of that.

What are some of the main obstacles you faced, and how have you attempted to address them?

Often, getting the grant is the easy part; the hard part is finding clients who are aligned in the core values that I have and navigating the environment with each community. The understanding is I write the grants for free, and if my clients get funded, they contract with my company. Several school districts fail to honor the agreement. I could have made communities sign formal agreements, but do I really want to go into court to force someone to work with me? Thankfully, most clients honor their word. This happens because there is often no incentive to change. Whether change happens often depends on leadership. I learned to work directly with young people because it is where I make the biggest impact.

What advice do you have for students seeking to enter the field of human rights advocacy?

Grant writing or being able to sell your product and story in a way that raises money is an important skill. California invests a lot into education: the first grant I wrote was \$6 million dollars for a school district with 20,000 people. Grant writing is a great thing to do for those willing to practice it by writing it. Another important skill is to spend the money effectively at a diligent rate, so you cannot wait until the end to spend it all. Funders want to know that you appreciate the funding and are using it for what you pitched. Ultimately, the most important advice is to be able to live up to your word and deliver on your promises.

PROFESSOR RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT:

Rima Basu: *Spectacle and Silence, The Ethics of Memory in the Digital Age*

By Eleanor Halaby '28

This year, Dr. Rima Basu, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Claremont McKenna College, is leading the Gould Center's Humanities Lab on *Spectacle and Silence: Ethics of Memory in the Digital Age*. This lab seeks to examine one of the most pressing moral questions of contemporary life: how does one balance the need to witness, record, and remember human suffering with the danger of performative activism and possible voyeurism, especially in a digital age where images of atrocity circulate with unprecedented speed? The lab asks students to confront the profound tension between the obligation to preserve a record of injustice and the danger of becoming spectators by drawing from philosophy, psychology, media studies, museum studies, and literature. A central topic is content moderators; those tasked with filtering problematic materials from social media feeds, who often bear the psychological burden of what others scroll past. By focusing on this invisible workforce, the lab raises questions about the ethicality of maintaining "clean" digital spaces.



Dr. Rima Basu

Over the semester, students also grapple with challenges of digital preservation and collective memory. In an era shaped by deepfakes, algorithmic curation, and manipulated imagery, the stability of visual evidence is no longer guaranteed. Research fellows are asked to consider how societies can responsibly preserve records of harm without sensationalizing suffering, desensitizing audiences, or exploiting the trauma individuals face.

Throughout their time as research fellows, students meet every two weeks to engage closely with theory and case studies via discussions on such topics and their connection to human rights. Even four months into the program, fellows like Marina Hagedorn claim that this research has been paramount to their understanding of ethicality in a developing world. In Hagedorn's words: "This lab made me realize the complexities of navigating what it means to be ethical through social media and the digital world, and how we will have to continue to adapt to shifting cultural and technological expectations."

After reading theorists like Susan Sontag and David Simon, students will work on a deliverable final project to encapsulate their work. These projects will be ultimately presented at the Gould Center's H-Lab Showcase in May. By examining the moral stakes of representation in historical and digital contexts, *Spectacle and Silence* encourages students to think deeply about responsibility—what we owe to those who suffer, and what we owe to those who watch.

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

from the John K. Roth Library

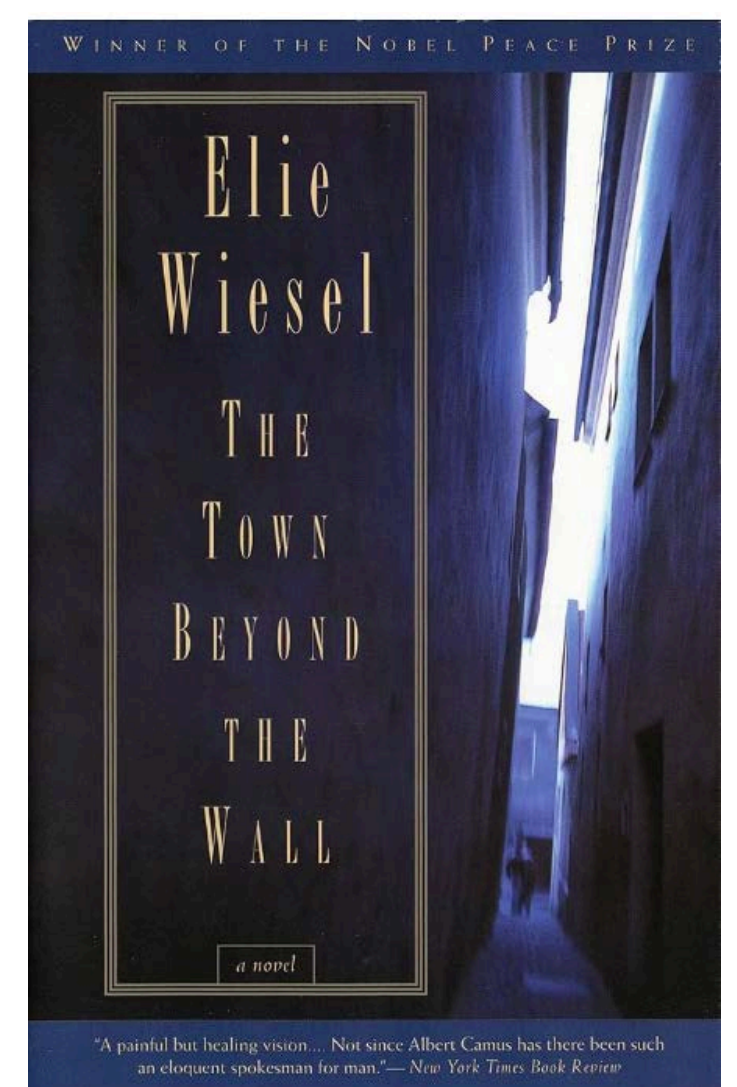
A key aspect of Human Rights advocacy is to continue learning, reading, sharing stories, and connecting with movements all across the globe. In this edition of book recommendations, all books featured have come from the Mgrublian Center's John K. and Lyn Roth Library. Our library is home to hundreds of sociological research, historical novels, biographies, and other great sources of knowledge about the Holocaust, Genocides, domestic and international human rights topics. The library is utilized and valued by students and faculty alike, making it a living resource for exploration in these fields. Below are the book selections for this Fall.

The Town Beyond the Wall

(Rinehart and Winston, 1964)

By Elie Wiesel

Drawing on his own return to postwar Europe, Wiesel tells the story of Michael, a Holocaust survivor who goes back to the city where his Jewish community was destroyed. Confronting indifference, silence, and the people who watched from behind closed windows, the novel examines memory, complicity, and the moral responsibility of bystanders in a world rebuilding itself after unthinkable violence.

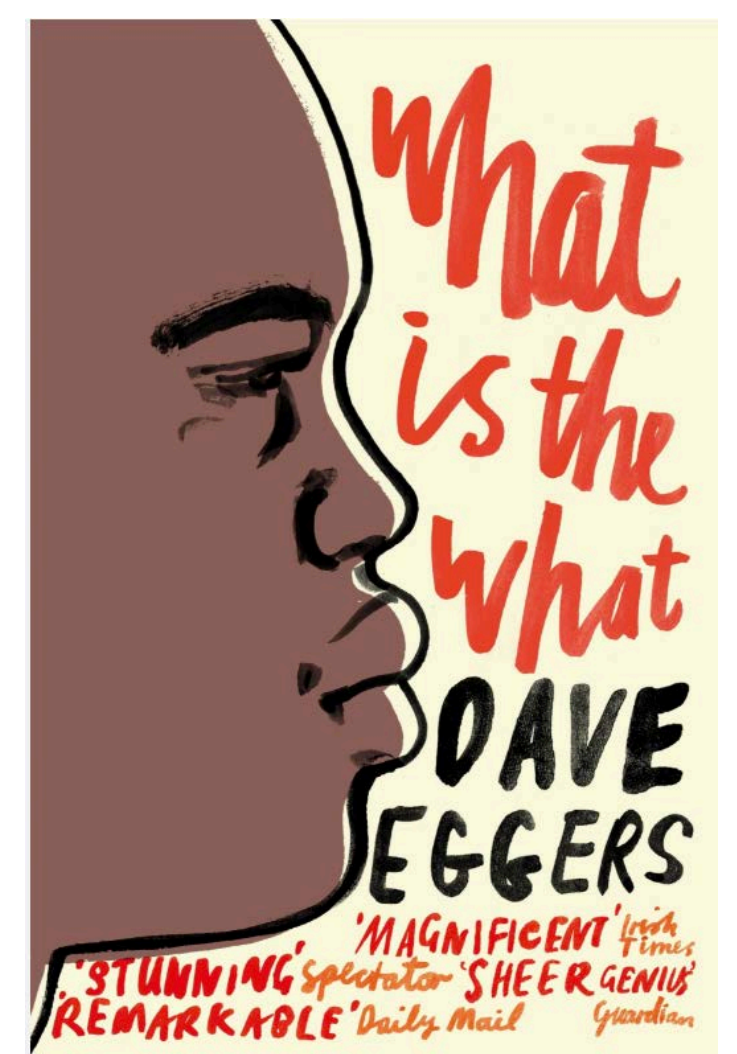


What is the What

(McSweeney's, November 2006)

By Dave Eggers

Based on the life of Valentino Achak Deng, this novel follows a Sudanese "Lost Boy" as he escapes civil war, crosses refugee camps, and eventually resettles in the United States. Eggers blurs fiction and biography to explore displacement, violence, and the impossible task of rebuilding a life in a country that doesn't always understand its refugees. At its core, it's a story about survival and the cost of being caught between nations.



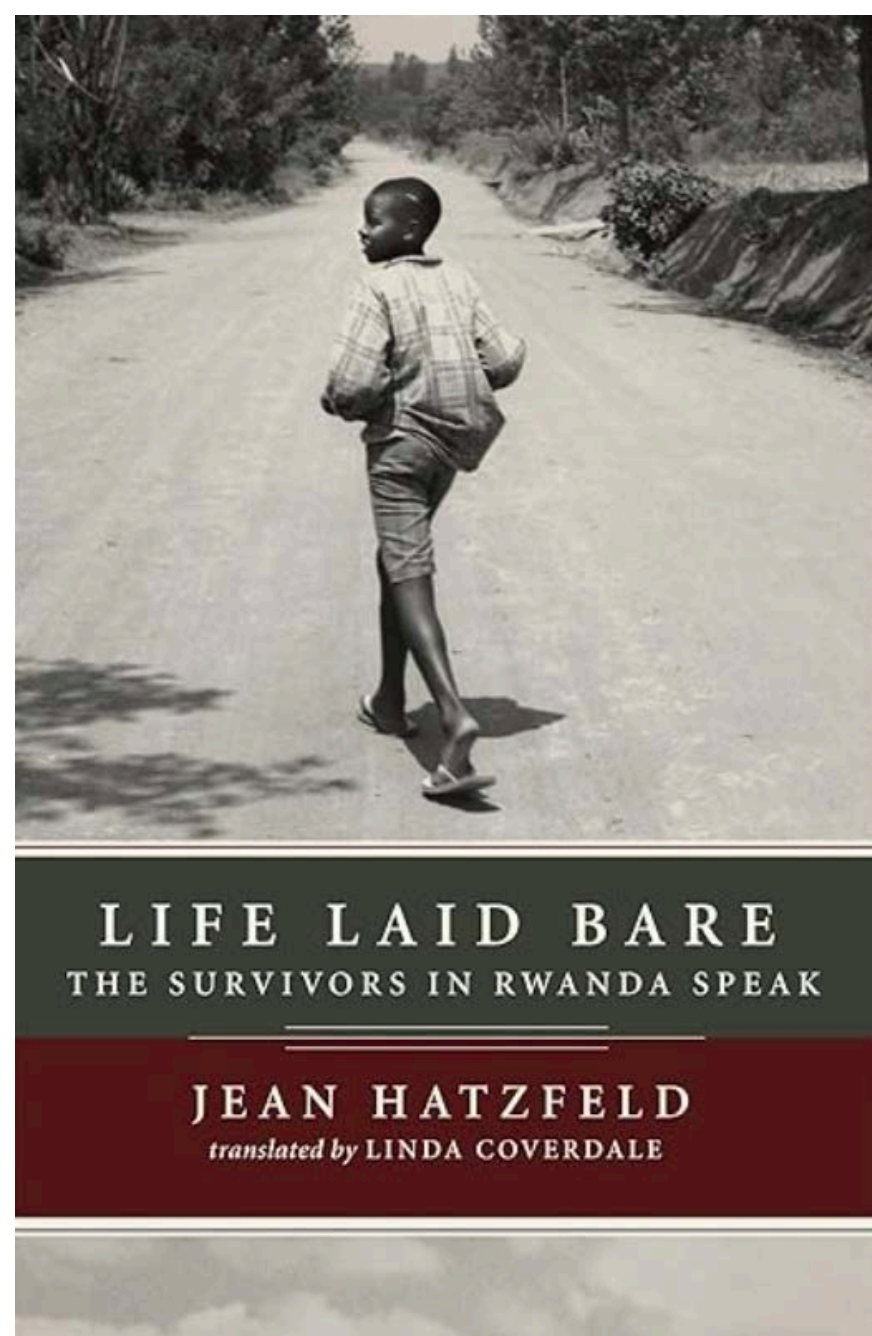
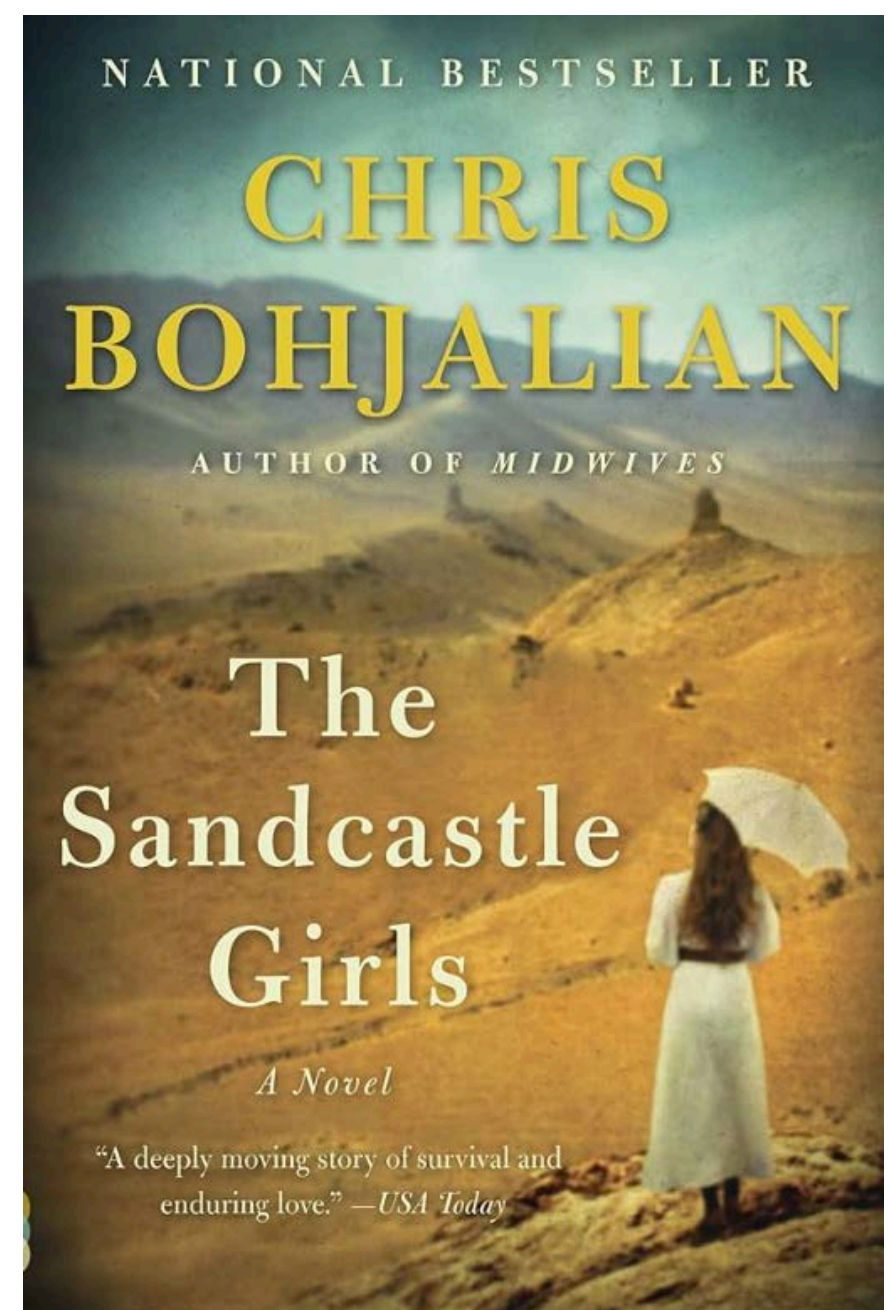


The Sandcastle Girls

(Doubleday, July 2012)

By Chris Bohjalian

Bohjalian weaves a dual-timeline story linking an American woman today to her grandparents' experiences during the Armenian Genocide. Through a love story set in a mission outpost in 1915 and its repercussions a century later, the novel confronts historical denial, generational trauma, and the quiet ways families carry the weight of atrocity. It's both a personal narrative and an entry point into a chapter of history still contested and under-recognized.



Life Laid Bare: Survivors in Rwanda Speak

(Other Press, October 2006)

By Jean Hatzfeld

Journalist Jean Hatzfeld gathers first-person accounts from Rwandan genocide survivors, allowing them to speak directly about the massacres, betrayals, and the struggle to rebuild their lives. The book's premise is simple but devastating: let survivors describe what happened in their own words. Together, their testimonies reveal how political manipulation and ethnic hatred can transform neighbors into executioners—and what healing looks like after such a rupture.



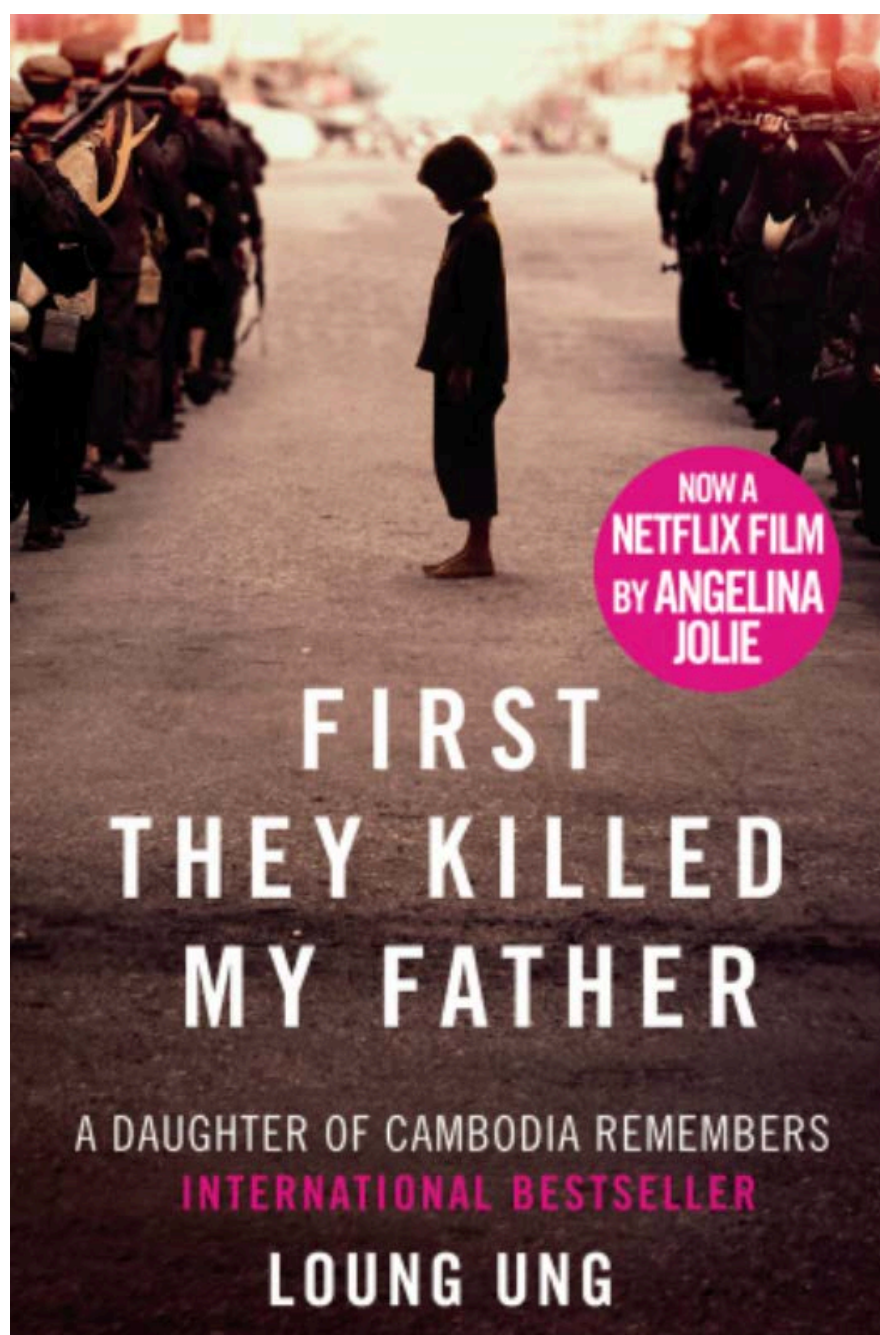


The White Rose: Munich 1942-1943

(Wesleyan University Press, 1983)

By Inge Scholl

Inge Scholl documents the true story of the White Rose, a small group of German students—including her siblings Hans and Sophie Scholl—who risked execution to resist Nazi rule. Through leaflets, public calls to conscience, and acts of quiet defiance, the group challenged a dictatorship built on fear and conformity. The book offers a close look at moral courage in a society where dissent meant death.



First They Killed My Father

(HarperCollins, April 2000)

By Loung Ung

Loung Ung recounts her childhood under the Khmer Rouge, from forced evacuations and labor camps to the loss of her family. Written with stark clarity, the memoir follows her transformation from a five-year-old girl in Phnom Penh to a survivor shaped by political terror and war. This book is both a personal testimony and a powerful critique of the regime that turned Cambodia into a landscape of silence and fear as it was ruled under an authoritarian regime.



2025-26 MGRUBLIAN STAFF

Student Assistants



Julianna Aparicio '29 - A first-year student at Claremont McKenna College from Los Angeles, studying Public Policy and Government. She brings a deep commitment to addressing complex social issues, particularly those surrounding immigration and refugee rights. She is also passionately interested in advancing global women's rights and exploring policies that support gender equity worldwide. As a Student Assistant, she will assist with the Human Rights Career Panels, the Podcasting team, and managing outreach as a member of the Social Media team. Julianna looks forward to translating her academic interests into meaningful, impactful work that supports human rights awareness and education.



Georgia Alford '28 - A sophomore majoring in International Relations and Spanish. Georgia is a Student Manager who helps liaise between students and faculty and also writes for the Center newsletter. On campus, Georgia is a member of the Model United Nations Team, she is an analyst on the Financials and REITs group of the CMC Student Investment Fund, and she is a faculty research assistant to a History Professor where she has created original maps to depict the paths of a war in South America. Last summer through Mgrublian's sponsored internships, Georgia worked as a Communications and Development intern for United Religions Initiative (URI) where she helped design the global communications strategy of the Organization and conducted internal research. In her free time, Georgia is a yoga teacher where she shares the Himalayan Kriya Tradition that she learned in her Yoga training in India.



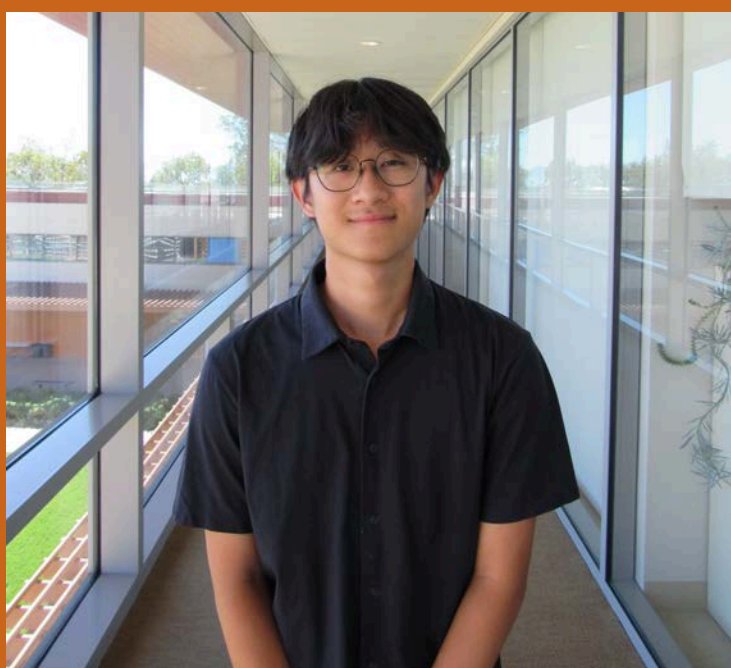
Annie Bernstein '27 - A junior, pursuing a major in International Relations. She has been working at the Mgrublian Center since her sophomore year. From an early age, she recognized the importance of upholding human rights and democracy, shaped by her heritage as a descendant of Holocaust survivors and 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. Annie studied abroad during fall 2025 in the Czech Republic where she concentrated her studies on human rights abuses in East-Central Europe during the 20th century. Annie is honored to work alongside the Mgrublian Center to continue advocating for human rights!



Nicolas Changbencharoen '26 - A senior majoring in Government and History, with a minor in Human Rights, Genocide, and Holocaust Studies. With a strong background in research, he is involved in this year's Immigration Research Cluster at the Mgrublian Center, drawing on skills gained in previous projects at the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies and the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies. Last year, as a John Roth Fellow at the Mgrublian Center, he undertook 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.



Catalina de la Peña '27 - A junior dual majoring in Philosophy and Government from Miami, FL. She has been working at the Mgrublian Center since her sophomore year, and her passion for human rights is inspired by her family's experience of leaving Cuba and immigrating to the United States. She has experience working in a congressional district office and at a law firm, where she collaborated closely with the firm's foundation to advance initiatives focused on educational equity. On campus, she is a member of PATH Consulting Club, a Lab Technology Assistant, and serves as an event commissioner for ASCMC. Outside of academics, she is a matcha fanatic, enjoys running, and reading in the sun. She is excited to continue to work with the Mgrublian this semester .



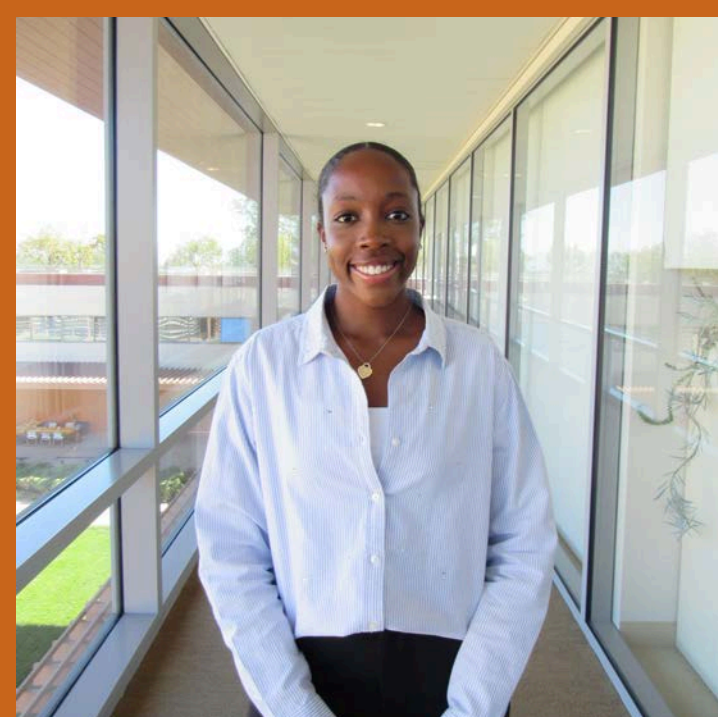
Logan Fang '28 - A sophomore majoring in Government. He first developed an interest in human rights after interning at a small grassroots organization advocating against the death penalty. Since learning about the carceral system, he's become interested in exploring how human rights intersect with the law in areas such as immigration. He is particularly passionate about studying the ways that legal discourse about immigration has shaped broader attitudes towards migration throughout history. On campus, he helps run CMC's social media pages and serves as a board member of APASA. He is also a research assistant at the Salvatori Center.



Gabe Gardner '28 - A sophomore studying Government with a focus in Public Law. As a Student Manager at the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights, he helps lead student programming, research initiatives, and community partnerships focused on justice and civic engagement. Gabe also serves as a Lead Instructor with the Prison Education Project, where he partnered with Mgrublian to develop a human rights curriculum for incarcerated students at the California Rehabilitation Center. Moreover, he is involved in the Dreier Roundtable as a Research Fellow where he is focusing on healthcare and education policy and how they can be reformed to connect law, policy, and human rights to advance equity and access to justice.



Gabriel Goldstein '27 - A junior from Highland Park, Illinois majoring in Government and Economics and pursuing a sequence in Ancient and Medieval Studies. 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.



Evan Goodman '28 - A sophomore from Atlanta, Georgia dual-majoring in Government and Integrated Science. At CMC, she serves as a Student Assistant at the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights, Student Connection Tutor under the Kravis Lab for Civic Leadership, Program Coordinator for Learn, Lead, and Serve, as well as a member of the Claremont-Mudd-Scripps women's soccer team. Evan has further experience in the human rights sector as she has previously interned with After Innocence, where she helped to spearhead communication with exonerees and facilitate their annual Dental Care Project in addition to completing research on compensation laws across various states. She has strong interests in both the humanities and STEM fields and hopes to use her dual degree to drive a career focused on creating justice and equality especially in the incarceration system.



Ambika Gupta '27 - A junior dual-ing in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) and Economics. She has been working at the Mgrublian Center since her freshman year and is now a Student Manager. She is excited to be back on campus after studying abroad in South Africa on a post-Apartheid studies program, where she did homestays across the country. She's worked at A Child's Dream, a non-profit organization that supports grassroots educational initiatives across Asia, at their Mae Sot office, conducting research on gender pay gaps and teaching English to Burmese migrants. She's also worked at Musizi University, the first liberal arts college based in Kampala, Uganda.



Reese Gutierrez '29 - A freshman majoring in Psychology and Data Science. She is a student assistant at the Mgrublian working on the website, social media, and the immigration reform lab. She is also a student social media assistant at the financial aid office and a member of the Groove Nation Dance Team. Outside of school, she is a marketing/communications intern at World Relief SoCal. She enjoys long naps, talking about F1, and creating Pinterest boards. Reese plans to become a software engineer after completing college.



Ellie Halaby '28 - A sophomore from Phoenix, Arizona dual majoring in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics and Literature. At the Mgrublian Center, Ellie works on the Newsletter team, organizes the library, and works on designing student merchandise! On campus, Ellie also works for the CWPD, the Gould Center for Humanities, and is a part of PATH consulting! Ellie's passion for Human Rights stemmed from her experience working in a Victim's Rights agency over the summer, which sparked an interest in the legal aspects of human rights. Now, she hopes to continue a career in law pertaining to human rights and victim advocacy. When not working at CMC or in class, Ellie can be found exploring new shops in Pasadena and LA, grabbing a Hojicha from the Motley, or watching old movies in her dorm with her friends!



Lan Ihsan '27 - A junior studying Government with a Legal Studies Sequence, she is originally from the Kurdistan region of Iraq and lives in Fairfax, Virginia. She is passionate about immigration policy and educational justice. Coming from a family of human rights advocates, her personal and professional development has led her to the Mgrublian Center. While at CMC, she has interned at the Julia Toro Law Firm, where she focused on immigration and refugee policy. She has also interned at United Religions Initiative, where she designed the global communications strategy, conducted internal research, and represented the organization as a speaker at the UN Headquarters. In fall 2025, she is a member of the CMC Washington Program and is a legislative intern for Senator Mark Warner in Washington, D.C. On campus, Lan is a research assistant at the Berger Institute for Individual and Social Development and at the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies. She is also a student assistant at the Financial Aid Office. Finally, she works with the Soll Center, which partners with a nonprofit organization called Uncommon Good to tutor local elementary school students. Lan plans to attend law school and continue advocating for human rights.



Sophie Jorgenson '28 - A sophomore majoring in Economics and Government. She is particularly passionate about educational justice, stemming from her experience in inner city public schools and her parents' work as public educators. This passion led her to get involved with the Prison Education Project, and through a partnership with Mgrublian, she now teaches a course on Human Rights to incarcerated students. On campus, she also works as a Writing Consultant with the CWPD, a Student Manager of the annual giving program, and is involved with Every Vote Counts and Claremont Women in Business.



Erin Kim '28 - Erin Kim is a second-year student studying International Relations with a Data Science sequence. At CMC, she serves as a Student Assistant at the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights, a Keck Center International Journalism Fellow, and a Research Fellow for the Dreier Roundtable, where she explores the intersections of governance, policy, and social justice. Erin has also worked internationally as a Strategy and Development Intern at Musizi University in Uganda, where she helped design a digital museum and led education initiatives for youth. She is passionate about global development, education, and human rights, and enjoys connecting policy to real-world impact through research and storytelling.



Gabby Kux '29 - A freshman studying Economics and Psychology. Originally from the D.C. area, Gabby has grown up in a Jewish community that's inspired by its value of tikkun olam (repairing the world) to fight for human rights and drive positive change. Within the center, Gabby works for the immigration research project, features guests on The WatchTower podcast, and creates mentorship initiatives. Gabby's also involved in Claremont's Women in Business Club, and hopes to merge her experiences to focus on economic inequality, particularly with fiscal policies and income inequalities.



Sophia Lakani '27 - A junior from Calgary, Canada, 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. As part of her work, 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, Sophia 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 sophomore majoring in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. On campus, she serves as the Associate Director of Communications for the Claremont Law & Business Review and volunteers with both the Prison Education Project and Liberty in North Korea. Michelle also conducts research for Professor Lynn Itagaki through the Mgrublian Center on various human rights issues, as well as for Professor Andrew Schroeder through the Gould Center on topics in political philosophy. Michelle is passionate about human rights and ethics, and she hopes to pursue a career as a judge. In her free time, she enjoys portrait sketching, photography, traveling, and meeting new people.



Keith Maben '28 - A sophomore majoring in Government. He is interested in immigration policy and law, and has a background in quantitative policy analysis. At the Mgrublian Center, he works on the Immigration Research in Action project, focusing on variety of issues regarding immigration enforcement, courts, and asylum cases. Previously he was a Roth Fellow where he conducted a nationwide county-level statistical analysis of sanctuary policies in the United States. He also worked directly with attorneys and migrants as a Legal Intern at Mission Action's Deportation Defence and Legal Advocacy Program. Elsewhere on campus, Keith also works as a Research Assistant at the Rose Institute, focusing on partisan and electoral analysis projects, as Consultant at Graphite Group, and as a delegate on the CMC Model UN team.



Faith Mack '29 - A freshman from Long Beach, California studying International Relations. Empowered by her strong sense of justice and commitment to service, Faith is passionate about highlighting human rights abuses in global conflicts and prison systems. As a Student Assistant she will help plan the Human Rights Career Panel, coordinate with the Prison Education Project, conduct research into environmental stressors and genocides, and support the Mentorship Program. Her other roles on campus include being a World Affairs Podcast Fellow with the Keck Center to study the Iranian Revolution and its effects, a Policy Consultant with PATH, and an active member of the Claremont Consortium Ballroom Dance Company. Faith plans to get an MA in Military History and conduct research regarding the intersection of international defense policy and human rights.



Abby Niquette '28 - A second-year majoring in International Relations with a regional interest in Latin America. On campus, she is a student assistant at the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights, a research assistant through the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies under Professor Jean-Pierre Murray, and a podcast interviewer and editor for Free Food for Thought, the Athenaeum's podcast. Additionally, she serves on the Claremont International Relations Society Executive Board, on ASCMC's Elections Committee, and as the co-President of the Claremont Amnesty International chapter. She was a leader on Amnesty USA's Youth Collective for two years, and she carries a deep passion for international human rights, particularly regarding immigration and education crises. Abby plans to pursue a master's degree in Foreign Service post-grad with the intent of becoming a Foreign Service Officer. Last summer, she was an Au Pair in the Canary Islands while conducting research on the future of the International Liberal Order through the Jack Stark Fellowship.



Sadie Saba '25 - A sophomore from Urbana, Maryland, studying International Relations and History. She is passionate about human rights, international aid, and how narratives of displacement are represented on the world stage, particularly relating to the Middle East. At the Mgrublian Center, she writes for the newsletter, interviews guests for The WatchTower podcast, and supports the Center's online presence. This past summer, she spent time in Lebanon and Jordan with Anera (American Near East Refugee Aid), documenting life in refugee camps and project sites and helping organize a fundraiser in Amman. Sadie is also a Research Fellow at the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies examining the role of historical perspectives in political crises, an active member of Advocates for Survivors of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, and a theater technician. Off campus, she can be found exploring national parks, museums, and coffee shops.



Maram Sharif '26 - A senior studying Economics and Finance as a Robert Day Scholar. She is passionate about community development and education policy, and has worked on sustainability projects and university curricula development. Through her main role as the Center's newsletter editor since her freshman year, Maram hopes to pursue meaningful impact locally and globally.



Rachel Svoyskiy '26 - A senior majoring in Economics and Government with a sequence in Human Rights, Genocide, and Holocaust Studies. Inspired by her Jewish heritage, her family's experiences as Soviet immigrants, and a deep commitment to justice, Rachel's interests focus on combatting antisemitism, refugee policy, and how marginalized communities' stories are represented in global human rights discourse. She has extensive experience in policy research, government advocacy, and nonprofit work, including an internship at the Simon Wiesenthal Center. At CMC, Rachel works for the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies, serves on the Board of Claremont Chabad, and is conducting research as a Roth Research Fellow. Rachel plans to attend law school and continue promoting justice and minority recognition on both local and global scales.



Kevin Wang '25 - A junior with dual majors in Economics and in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE). He is interested in international law, norms, and institutions, especially during armed conflict. He is a former International Journalism Fellow at the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies and has also held a variety of other roles. On campus, he is also a tutor with Student Connection, host and interviewer for the Athenaeum's Free Food for Thought podcast, and co-founder of the Piano Tuning and Repair Club. He hopes to understand why we make wrong choices and how we can do better. He enjoys reading, learning about random trivia, and hot chocolate.

2025-26 JOHN K. ROTH RESEARCH FELLOWS



Victor Anyomi '28 - A Ghanaian sophomore at Pomona College, double majoring in Economics and International Relations. An Alan M. Thornton, Pomona College, and Robert Day Scholar, he also currently serves as Chief of Staff for the ASPC (Pomona's student government). As Pomona College's first John K. Roth Fellow, Victor's research explores how Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) intersect with state practice under the "unwilling or unable" doctrine by examining how this justification for the use of force often expands state power while diminishing human rights protections, particularly across the Global South. His past works have appeared in the Claremont Journal of International Relations, the Claremont Journal of Law and Public Policy (where he also currently serves as a staff editor), and is forthcoming in the Penn Undergraduate Law Journal. You'll find him occasionally wandering through the farmers' market on Sundays, reorganizing his workspace for the tenth time, or catching up on the latest happenings in international law.



Imani Ferris '28 - A sophomore at CMC from Los Angeles, California studying psychology. She has plans for attending Physician Associate School and is passionate about community health and human rights. On campus, she is the Vice President of Social Media for Mixed@CMC, volunteers with the Prison Education Project teaching classes to incarcerated individuals, and competes on the CMS softball team. She is also a QuestBridge Match Scholar and serves as a CARE Fellow for CMC's CARE Center, where she facilitates various programs related to inclusion, equity, identity, community building, and wellness. Inspired by her Salvadoran descent and the recent political climate in El Salvador, Imani will examine how El Salvador's emergency security policies have created hidden social, economic, and psychological costs for women and families connected to detainees as a John K. Roth Fellow.



Eliza Gunter '27 - A junior from Pasadena, California, majoring in Classical Studies and Government. On campus, Eliza is the Director of Training for CMC Mock Trial and a Research Fellow at the Dreier Roundtable. As a John K. Roth Fellow, Eliza's research centers on the precarious position of culture and artists under genocidal regimes. Specifically, she explores the dual role of music as both a tool for violence during, and catharsis after, the Cambodian Genocide.



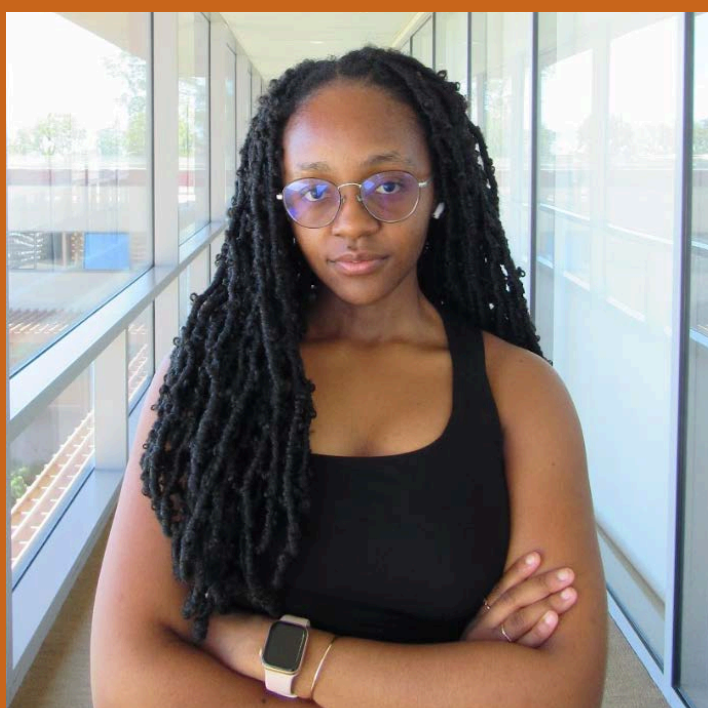
Melanie Haro-Cortes '28 - A sophomore from Houston, Texas, majoring in Economics and Public Policy with a Data Science sequence. On campus, Melanie is a student researcher at the STATS Lab, RLCIE Fellow, and Career Service Mentor. As a John K. Roth Fellow, she researches how legal design can protect human rights and expand access to justice amid intensified immigration enforcement. In her free time, she enjoys running long distances, learning photography, or working on other passion projects.



Zinnia Khan '29 - A freshman from Lafayette, California, studying Public Policy with plans to attend law school. She serves as a Policy Analyst for the Roberts Environmental Center, is a Vice President of the Claremont Chapter of Amnesty International, and sings in the 5C a cappella group The Shades. For her Roth Fellowship, Zinnia plans to collaborate with her friend and classmate, Adeline McKenzie, to research barriers to healthcare access, particularly those related to Certificate of Need laws. In her free time, she enjoys watercolor painting, thrifting for trinkets, and eating miso soup. Zinnia is honored to be a John K. Roth Fellow and looks forward to developing her research skills through this opportunity.



Adeline McKenzie '29 - A freshman from Portland, Oregon, studying Public Policy. She plans to attend law school to study Constitutional Law. She is currently a Research Assistant at the Rose Institute for State and Local Government, a Vice President of Amnesty International, and the Crown Dorm President. She is a Roth Research fellow studying legal barriers to healthcare access, specifically Certificate of Need Laws, with Zinnia Khan. In her free time she enjoys, running with friends, backpacking and skiing.



Vision Tobias '28 - A Namibian sophomore majoring in Economics with interests in international development, governance, and policy. She's currently a Research Assistant at the Berger Institute and a former World Affairs Fellow with the Keck Center, where she explored questions about electoral politics. As a Roth Research Fellow at the Mgrublian Center, her project will focus on the genocide against the Herero and Nama people of Namibia and its connections to the Holocaust. In her free time, she enjoys long walks and listening to podcasts about health, politics, and culture.

LOOKING AHEAD

SPRING 2026 PROGRAMMING

- February 6th, 12:00pm – *Careers in Human Rights: The 2024 Winners of the Elbaz Family Post-Graduate Fellowship*. José Chiquito '24 and Riley Green '24, CMC Athenaeum.
- February 9th, 12:00pm - *The Last Days of Genocidaires: Putin's Endgame in Historical Perspective*. Anna Romandash, CMC Athenaeum.
- February 13th, 1:00-3:00pm - *Immigration Law Clinic*. William Menard '09, Paloma Palmer '19, Isabel Thacker, Kravis 321.
- February 20th, 12:00pm - *Dismantling Demand: Who Fuels the Sex Trade and at What Cost?* Yasmin Vafa, Christian Eduardo, CMC Athenaeum.
- March 6th, 12:00-2:00pm - *Promotion Power*. Dr. Marilou Ryder, Annual Women and Leadership Workshop, co-sponsored with the Berger Institute, Kravis Leadership Institute, and the Women and Leadership Alliance. CMC Athenaeum.
- March 16-20th – Spring Break DC Networking Trek, featuring visits to Mgrublian Center partners.
- April 7th, 12:00pm – Program on Rwanda and commemorating the survivors & victims of the '94 genocide. CMC Athenaeum.
- April 14th, 12:00pm – *Whose Lives Matter? American Memory of the Holocaust and the Question of Racial Hierarchy*, Barry Trachtenberg (Wake Forest University), CMC Athenaeum.
- April 16th, 2:00-4:30pm – Mgrublian Center Spring Advisory Board Meeting, Kravis 367
- April 16th, 6:00pm – Mgrublian Annual Lecture in Armenian Studies, CMC Athenaeum
- May 1st, 3:30-5:30pm – 2025-26 John K. Roth Research Fellowship Presentations, KRV 321.



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

<https://human-rights.cmc.edu/>