

# In Solidarity

Strength in Numbers.  
Power of Community.

# Frankly

The Fulbright Alumni e.V. Magazine



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# Letter from the Editor



Dear Readers,

Amid political and social unrest, advocating for a cohesive society and supporting one another to help ignite positive change is more vital than ever, which is the focus of this year's FRANKly theme, "In Solidarity."

Solidarity is a flagship value of the Fulbright Program; from promoting inclusion to encouraging intercultural exchange, Fulbright is a model example of the power that lies behind a cohesive network. Fostering friendships among people and cultures, and creating mutual understanding all remain at the core of the Fulbright Program's mission throughout the world.

The 2018 edition of the FRANKly explores the meaning of solidarity on all levels and in all aspects of life. We welcomed contributions that illuminate the importance of solidarity, especially in connection with the Fulbright Program. Writers share stories of those who exhibit intrinsic social responsibility, and through their articles we can better understand how solidarity is expressed and represented today, be it in the media, in politics, in their interactions with others, or through the Fulbright Program.

I speak from personal experience when I say that Fulbrighters are the first to rise to the occasion when called upon to be inclusive and to help make new grantees and alumni feel welcome. Two articles in particular in this issue exemplify some of the innovative ways in which Fulbrighters have stepped up to the plate: an article from Benita Pungwe highlights the group 'Fulbright Noir,' a platform that "shares stories of the few black scholars in the Fulbright Program," and Michaela Gill introduces 'Fulbright Prism,' a group for past and present Fulbright grantees who identify as LGBTQ+. Both of these groups are wonderful examples of the acceptance that Fulbrighters practice.

I would like to thank Astrid Weingarten, our graphic designer, for her exceptional guidance and assistance in creating this issue, as well as our proofreaders, Martin Kohler and Andreas Schoberth. A very big thank you as well to all of the contributors who shared their writing and stories with us.

Anna Irvine  
Happy Reading!  
Anna Irvine

SHARING  
is CARING  
Share your story,  
share your idea,  
share your knowledge,  
share it here!

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# Greetings from the President



Dear Fulbrighters and Friends,

It is my pleasure to introduce our 2018 issue of the FRANKly magazine. First, I want to thank our editor Anna Irvine for her great work on this year's edition. I also would like to thank the authors for their contributions.

The theme of this year's issue is "In Solidarity," and I believe that there could hardly be a better topic to follow our last issue, Fulbright in a post-truth age. Just as fake news and post-truth are the means that drive people apart, solidarity and tolerance are the means which bring them back together.

Senator Fulbright founded the Fulbright Program to build mutual understanding and create a more peaceful world between peoples who had been alienated from each other by devastating wars. From his own experiences as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford University, Senator Fulbright learned the value of living in a foreign country and seeing the world from a different perspective. The same political attitude in the United States that allowed Senator Fulbright to create the Fulbright Program has also helped build the globalized world we live in.

Today, more than 70 years later, we are driven apart again, not by war, but by a multitude of crises and developments. The Euro-crisis, migration, populism, and the shift in political attitude threaten international cooperation and even longstanding institutions such as the Fulbright Program.

Solidarity unites us and enables us to reach goals we cannot achieve on our own. For us Fulbright alumni, one such goal is supporting the Fulbright Program. In this regard, I want to warmly thank Dr. Oliver Schmidt and Daniel Wagner from the German Fulbright Commission for their initiative to improve and extend the collaboration between the Alumni and the Commission.

To increase international understanding and to better highlight the impact of transatlantic exchange, the German Fulbright Alumni Association is also now coordinating its international activities with the Congress-Bundestag Exchange Program alumni board. Together, we are working on a new strategy for alumni cooperation in Europe. It is our goal that this newfound collaboration will provide the synergy and momentum to strengthen such international exchange programs and demonstrate their importance to a broader audience.

I hope you enjoy reading our 29<sup>th</sup> issue of the FRANKly. As you read, I urge you to keep in mind what Senator J. William Fulbright once famously said: "Our future is not in the stars but in our own minds and hearts."

Yours truly,  
Florian Grigoleit



Marion Schweighart



Julia Aronova



Florian Grigoleit



Marina Kohl



Fabienne Rudolph

# Meet the Board

## Marion Schweighart Vice President Communications

After her Bachelor in American Studies and Geography, Marion Schweighart went abroad as a Fulbright scholar to pursue her studies at University of Chicago, IL in 2012/13. After this experience, she started her Master of Science Program in "Geography of Global Change" at the University of Freiburg. She gained practical experience within the fields of Communications, Media, Public Relations, (Scientific) Journalism and (Online-) Marketing and Management with internships at "DIE ZEIT", DNV GL and the Helmholtz Association. Since November 2016, Marion has been working as a project manager and consultant for regional, urban and communal development, participation and governance support. Marion is highly motivated to contribute to the Fulbright Alumni e.V. in her position as the new board member as Vice President of Communications through supporting our association's work when it comes to communication related tasks and enhancing the association's website together with our webmaster. She will also aim at enhancing our appearance on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as revitalizing our blog „FAIN:“ these are the main tasks for the upcoming years.

## Julia Aronova Treasurer

Julia spent 1.5 years in Atlanta, Georgia, doing her Masters degree in Industrial Engineering. She returned after her Fulbright to Germany in December 2017 and started to work as a Data Scientist for a semiconductor producer in Munich. In March she was elected as treasurer for the German Fulbright Alumni Association.

## The Board

### Florian Grigoleit President

Florian Grigoleit is a Ph.D. student in computer science at the Technische Universität München where he focuses on artificial intelligence in Engineering. He spent his Fulbright year from 2010–11 in Pullman, WA, where he obtained a Master in Computer Engineering. Due to his great experiences at Alumni Events, he joined the board of the Alumni Association in 2015 as treasurer and was elected as president this past spring. As president, his focus lies on strengthening the cooperation with other Alumni associations and the Fulbright Commission.

### Marina Kohl Vice President Members

Marina started her academic career in Lüneburg with a BA in Applied Cultural Studies and then moved on to Fulda for the bilingual MA program, “Intercultural Communication and European Studies.” During that time she spent her Fulbright year at Arizona State University in the Communication Studies Department, focusing on interpersonal communication and mediation. Marina now works as a refugee advisor at Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg, supporting higher-educated refugees to get a good start in the German academic world. VP Members is her first position in the Fulbright Alumni Association. She is excited to support the alumni network and regional chapters.

### Fabienne Rudolph Vice President Events

Fabienne Rudolph graduated with a BA from Hochschule Darmstadt, majoring in Digital Media/Sound before receiving a Fulbright stipend and moving to Boston, MA in 2013. Whilst there she attended Northeastern University and successfully graduated with a M.Sc. in Music Industry Leadership in May 2014. Upon returning to Germany, Fabienne has continually been active in the Fulbright Alumni Association, attending regional events of the Frankfurt, Mannheim-Heidelberg and Berlin regional chapters. She currently works at Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishing as a Copyright and Creative Services Administrator.

## The Extended Board



### Anna Irvine FRANKly Editor

After receiving her degree in International Relations from the Ohio State University in 2014, Anna spent time volunteering in Bolivia. Once back in the US she worked as an Office Manager in her Ohio hometown before traveling to Germany as a Fulbright Scholar to work as an English Teaching Assistant in Rheinfelden. She was then awarded a grant to extend her scholarship for a second school year at a Gymnasium outside of Stuttgart. Following the completion of her Fulbright, Anna moved to Berlin to work as a Program Coordinator for Global Bridges e.V., an internationally operating nonprofit organization. In fall 2018 she began a Master’s degree program at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. This is her first year in charge of editing the FRANKly.

### Simon Wimmer Webmaster

Simon majored in Computer Science at the Technical University of Munich before moving to Philadelphia for his Fulbright year. He completed a Masters in Computer Science at the University of Pennsylvania, and thereafter joined Facebook in California for an internship. Afterwards he returned to Munich to pursue a PhD in Computer Science. Simon got fond of the Association at the regional chapter in Munich and various events, particularly the Fulbright Young Leaders Meeting. In early 2017, he provisionally took over the post of the webmaster and has stuck with it since then.



### Dunja Nofal Diversity Initiative Co-Chair

Dunja Nofal is currently a student of Politics and Economics at the University of Potsdam. In summer 2014, she was granted a Fulbright Scholarship in line with the Diversity Initiative and studied for one month at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. During her stay she pursued various academic courses focusing on persuasive speaking and entrepreneurship. After coming back from the U.S., she started the European Volunteer Service (EVS) in London and worked in a small human rights organization called CADFA (Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association). Upon her return to Germany, Dunja got involved with the Fulbright Alumni e.V. She has served as the Fulbright Diversity Chair on the extended board since January 2016. She feels committed to supporting the idea of diversity, especially within the alumni group. Events like the Fulbright Diversity Weekend aim to discuss the importance and meaning of Diversity.

### Kateryna Mishina Diversity Initiative Co-Chair

Kateryna is currently studying International Business Administration at the WHU Otto Beisheim School of Management. Before coming to WHU she participated in the Fulbright Diversity Program in 2014 at the University of Kentucky and subsequently joined the Fulbright Alumni Association. In addition to her studies at WHU, Kateryna also has a degree from the GSA University Steinbeiß Berlin in 2016. Kateryna is passionate about international work, and therefore has gained international experience during recent years in the academic and professional fields, participating in programs in Europe, China, India, Korea, USA, and Canada. She is looking forward to supporting the Fulbright Alumni Association this year by empowering the idea of diversity and helping organize events.

### Henning Blunck Online Editor

Henning Blunck helps the board and association members share information through the homepage. He did his Fulbright exchange at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 2010/2011. After finishing his PhD, he is now working as a Data Scientist in Bonn.

### Alexandra Drexler Outreach

After graduating from George Washington University in Washington, DC, Alexandra moved to Berlin to work in the German Bundestag as a policy advisor, while also completing her Fulbright as an English teaching assistant. In 2017 Alexandra decided to focus more on international education and less on politics. She continued working as a teaching assistant in Berlin and started working as a consultant for several organizations with a focus on intercultural education and active learning. Alexandra is excited to continue her engagement in international education and Fulbright as the Outreach Chair for the Fulbright Alumni Association. She plans to use her connections in politics and international education to better promote Fulbright and improve cooperation between other organizations and alumni associations. Alexandra is also on the executive board of the American Bundestag Network, the alumni association for American participants of the Internationales Parlaments-Stipendium.

from left to right:  
Anna Irvine,  
Simon Wimmer,  
Dunja Nofal,  
Kateryna Mishina,  
Henning Blunck,  
Alexandra Drexler



# The Extended Board



From left to right:  
Eugen Litwinow,  
Dagmar Schreiber,  
Felix Wehinger,  
Anna-Elisabeth Schmitz

## Eugen Litwinow Mentoring

During his Fulbright year 2011-2012, Eugen roamed the streets of New York and attended the Photography Program at the Parsons School for Design. He is co-founder of the Ellery Studio for Creative Strategy, a Berlin-based design agency and home to several other Fulbright Alumni. This year, Eugen took over the challenge to implement a FAeV mentorship program. To that end, he explores new integrative structures to tap into the interdisciplinary and intergenerational knowledge and network potential of our great Fulbright Alumni community.

## Dagmar Schreiber Sailing Trip

The coordinator of the biannual FAeV's sailing trip organizes the trip with operator Clipper – Deutsches Jugendwerk zur See e.V. This involves finding the right ship and determining the route, destination, time, crew, etc. From the invitation to all FAeV members, sending packing lists, and managing last-minute changes, the position entails doing sweet work while looking forward to a relaxing and inspiring week on the Baltic Sea with fellow Fulbrighters every other summer. Dagmar spent her Fulbright year (1991/92) in Washington, D.C., obtaining a Master of Laws degree in International & Comparative Law from George Washington University Law School. She has enjoyed sailing on old wooden ships ever since her first FAeV sailing trip in 1993 and tries very hard to get other Fulbrighters hooked on the same sea adventure.

## Felix Wehinger Mulert Award

Felix received his B.A. in English and Gender Studies at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and his M.A. in North American Studies at the John-F.-Kennedy Institute at Freie Universität Berlin. His studies focused on race and gender relations in the United States. As a Fulbright grantee he was enrolled in the African American studies program at UCLA in 2011/2012. Currently he is working as a PR-consultant at neues handeln GmbH in Berlin. In spring 2017, Felix joined the Extended Board as the coordinator for the Mulert Award.

## Anna-Elisabeth Schmitz International Coordinator

Lisa graduated from Ruhr-Universität Bochum in 2011 with a B.A. in History and English & American Studies and from Westfälische Hochschule in 2014 with a B.A. in Journalism and Public Relations. She subsequently moved to Boston on a Fulbright scholarship in 2014 to obtain an M.S. in Global Studies and International Relations with a concentration in conflict resolution from Northeastern University. Lisa currently lives in Lüneburg, where she is pursuing her Ph.D. in Political Science at Leuphana University. Her primary areas of scholarly interest include psycho-cultural determinants and factors of conflict and conflict management. Her previous work experience includes a position in the Cultural Affairs section at the German Consulate General in Boston. Lisa joined the German Fulbright Alumni Association as a member of the extended board in 2016. In her capacity as the International Coordinator, Lisa is responsible for reaching out to and keeping in contact with other Fulbright Alumni communities around the world and exploring potential collaboration opportunities.

## Jürgen Simon Archive

At the age of above 30, the German Fulbright Alumni Association has accumulated documents, publications and notes, which reflect the spirit of the past decades as well as the ongoing activities. To develop the structure for preserving the Association's documents for future generations of Fulbright alumni, this Extended Board position was created in 2015. With a Fulbright travel grant plus a direct exchange fellow-ship of Christian-Albrechts-University at Kiel, Jürgen continued his student life at the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. Years later he returned to Germany with an MBA and a Ph.D. in Business. He worked in various positions in banking and finance, followed by jobs as administrator and instructor for universities of applied sciences.

## Sarah Martin Contact for American Grantees

In 2015, Sarah graduated from the University of Oregon with a B.A. in German, with minors in Business Administration and Music. She spent her 2015-16 Fulbright year as an ETA at a Gymnasium in Herne, NRW, and is currently working on her M.A. at the Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich. At the LMU she works as a peer tutor and workshop leader in the Writing Center. Sarah really enjoyed her Fulbright year and was happy to lead an ETA workshop at the Welcome Meeting in Fall 2017. At the 2018 General Assembly she was voted to be the contact person for current American grantees in Germany. She hopes to hear from you soon or see you at any upcoming Fulbright events!

## Elke Handschug-Brosin Family Weekend

Elke founded the Fulbright Family Weekend because she wanted to stay active in the FAeV as a mother of three boys. Her twins were born in 2000, and the tradition of the Fulbright Family Weekend started in 2001. It is meant to target everyone who feels part of the Fulbright Family – not only those who have turned into parents. The event takes place on an annual basis in Königstein near Dresden (Saxon Switzerland). The next Family Weekend is scheduled for May 30<sup>th</sup>– June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. Elke spent three years (1992–1995) as a Fulbright Scholar in Michigan and Alaska. She graduated from MSU with a Master's Degree in Park and Recreation Resource Management and headed the Visitor Industry Program at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau. Her heart has never really left Alaska, thus, she has turned her dedication to this beautiful state into a career, currently as the European representative of Explore Fairbanks Alaska. Elke lives in Radebeul near Dresden with her family.

## Holger Schöner Mailing Lists

From 1997-98, Holger enjoyed his stay in Boulder, Colorado, while working towards a Master of Science degree in Computer Science. In the meantime, he finished his PhD at the Technical University of Berlin, gained experience in industrial data analysis in Austria, and is currently working in Germany. He started his Fulbright Alumni career as head of the Regional Chapter Berlin, then became Vice President for Communications from 2001-2003, followed by a now long history as mailing list manager.

The member of the Extended Board not featured here is **Hermes Winands**, data management.



From left to right: Jürgen Simon, Sarah Martin, Elke Handschug-Brosin, Holger Schöner





by Eva Rüskamp

It is my second time in Sneedville, Tennessee. This time the sun shines. It is mid-April but feels more like one of those early days of summer with the golden light emboldening the lush greens of the trees that cover the mountain slopes enclosing the town. In such moments, Appalachia looks friendly, almost idyllic. Since we passed over Clinch Mountain, I have lost all cell reception. When I tell folks at the Fire Department's monthly Friday Fish Fry that I am with AT&T, they laugh, "AT&T don't serve rural America – if I think about it, no one does." And Sneedville, or better Hancock, is as rural as rural America gets. The town is nestled between two mountain ridges, difficult to cross on the serpentine roads that make even a grown man flinch. "It ain't the roads that terrify me so much," one of my acquaintances explains, "but them people on it, who had no driver's ed. You see, Tennessee don't believe in formal driver's education – or any education really." They laugh but their faces are grim. Most inhabitants of this narrow valley, the Clinch River carved out of the mountains, do not live in Sneedville itself. It is a town, I am told, one can easily miss unless both traffic lights happen to be red at the same time. Most live in the hollers that cut into the ridges and hills. They are the original hill people, or in the more derogatory language of the outside, "hicks and hillbillies."

Towns like Sneedville are what most researchers, journalists, and politicians consider the worst type of rural in America, Appalachian rural. It is part of that infamous region in America whose residents have become the main characters in a never-ending story about vicious independence, violence, whiskey, and Trump's election. The first time I visit Sneedville is in January, late in the day and I take a wrong turn into the wrong holler, the sound of a lonely banjo playing in my mind. It is easy to get caught in the mystery of Appalachia and the dangers that outsiders are

supposed to experience when they come to this lost part of America. The anxiety and sense of hostility is felt by many, even by those who – so I am told – "have the hills in their blood." Civilization might be just a literal holler away, but it certainly feels like time and progress have left these parts untouched. It may be an unlikely place for a Fulbrighter to feel drawn to, but here I am, because this IS America – the America that turns elections and reminds her more cosmopolitan and aloof counterparts in their urban dwellings every couple of years what it is made of.

While Hancock County is not the worst rural county in America, not even in Appalachia, it gives you a sense of what to expect in those "deep dark hills of Eastern Kentucky" and West Virginia. These counties that have given rise to some of the wildest tales of American folk and bluegrass legends have taught me more about solidarity in America and its failings than nine years of intensive study. My five months in Tennessee give me a taste of the "bitter brew" that so many Americans are drinking from their everyday cups. Appalachia and all those other 'forgotten' parts of this incredibly rich nation, which also harbors an incredibly poor nation, are torn apart by the consequences of decades, if not centuries, of inequality, racism, and internal colonialism. Paul Theroux, who traveled widely on all five continents, faces his own nation in his travel record *Deep South* (2012), finding a comparison between parts of Alabama and Sub-Saharan Africa to be to the disadvantage of Alabama. And Alabama is but one of the 13 states whose mountainous counties comprise the Appalachian Regional Commission, dedicated to the alleviation of poverty in Appalachia since 1960. If one judges a nation by its treatment of its poorest, America is far from being the shining city upon the hill. And Appalachia has a lot of hills to go by.



Much has been published of late that seeks out to explain Trump, this poster child of all that seems wrong with America and the people that voted for him, who – by association – become the bottom feeders, "the basket of deplorables", as Hillary Clinton said, in one of her less fine moments. The books are written and read in order for the coastal elites to understand the minds and hearts of these characters, following that long tradition of trying to make sense of Appalachia and the states south of the Mason-Dixon-Line. There is a strangely loving tune these texts all carry and that seems to catch on so successfully with their readers: there is a warmth that begins to radiate from the writings and spread in readers' hearts, as we follow the authors' exploration of these Strangers in Their Own Land (Hochschild 2018), as the city-dwelling Americans realize that

these conservative mountain and delta folks are what they thought they were no longer themselves – Americans first. In a way, these books reflect a search, not for knowledge alone, but one for a lost sentiment, a lost virtue of America: solidarity – not least among its own fellow citizens.

Solidarity is support in the absence of true acquaintance, a sentiment often based on ideas about 'the other' more than factual knowledge, mostly on ideas of shared values and shared hopes. Shared values, however, require a common past, or rather a common interpretation of its meaning, and shared hopes require a common vision of the future – neither exists in the current United States. Perhaps it never did, but the battle lines between the different versions and meanings of America's past as well as the ideas about America's future seem deeper than before. These trenches, though, have been dug long before the current administration took office, and were but covered by an uneasy compromise that the past should only matter so much as it productively informs the progress to a better future. These battle lines are perhaps most raw and gruesome in the South, but no less impactful anywhere else.

When I came to Tennessee to do my research, 6 years after my Fulbright in Oregon, I came with a suitcase full of expectations. After all, I knew America, didn't I? I knew what to expect. From various visits before, I knew how to





navigate the complicated waters and curvy roads of the Southern United States and was ready to go out there and revolutionize the way we all think about environmental governance in rural America. Well, one of the first things I learned upon arrival was that yes, it was unusually cold for an East Tennessee winter but, “really, honey, East Tennessee ain’t the South because East Tennessee was never on no wrong side of no war”. Indeed, East Tennessee had been a proud and resistant Union stronghold during the unfortunate war of Southern secession – as they call it in mountainous parts of Tennessee and Kentucky – but in order not to offend one’s genteel Confederate neighbors, no one is going to point it out too boldly. Thus, while East Tennessee once stood in strong solidarity with “damyankees”, such historic solidarity was not to put a strain on current relations. These days, although they feel they are obviously not cut from the same cloth, most mountain folks are more inclined to stand with their Southern flatland neighbors than they do with the city-slickers of the upper East and the West Coast. After all, they are a people that regularly seems to forget they exist and when they do remember them – usually during election season – treats them with nothing but contempt.

This contempt is often based on a profound ignorance of Appalachia and the South more generally, as well as on the caricatures made of the people that live in these places. It is an ignorance that turns their interpretations of past and present into reactionary and illiterate versions of history without a future, supposedly long overcome by the educated and progressive. And they are caricatures that turn the people of Appalachia and their aspirations into racist and misogynist men who wish to return to a past that never existed. How can one stand in solidarity with anyone like that? How can one consider them equal in any way? Well, no one is asking to do such a thing. Since that is not the reality of Appalachia, it is far more complicated than the tales and the stereotypes. In many cases, it may be just as bleak and devastating, but in others it may be something entirely else. The most difficult part about seeing Appalachia for what it is though, is to relearn how to endure its contradictions with equanimity. The history of Appalachia and the South seems very simple to those outside of it. The more one becomes accustomed to it, however, the more it becomes like the swampy grounds and rugged mountains it was lived upon, where the dangers of sinking in, tripping over, gator and snake bites mix with the most beautiful



sights and flowers, the calmest waters and sweetest fruits. The extent to which humans can live with ambivalence is never as visible as in a society in which the belonging to a race, class, and gender dictate the rules of social intercourse but where the harsh realities of life make following these rules impossible.

Margo is one of those people who capture your attention immediately, her earnest yet life-affirming, almost jovial presence is striking and she owns the space she occupies. Margo chooses her words – and as I later learn – her people carefully. When she delivers her thoughts, it is with force and conviction, no wavering, no hesitation. I am sitting in a discussion about equity in rural development, when I meet her. Much of what is said on equity, I have heard before, until Margo speaks. Her words still echo in my mind: “It is hard to create equity in an environment of scarcity. Always has been, but these days, something is different,” she says, and weighing her words, she continues, “I am from these hills, I was born here, I worked and loved them all my life, I’ll die here, but of late I started to wonder again whether it might be before my time has come.” And then she tells us how, when she drives up and down the mountains visiting partners and projects in the communities far from the beaten path, she fills up her red old pick-up truck. Fills it up, drives on the speed limit, and prays she does not have to stop, or worse, get stopped. “Because people like me are known to have disappeared in these hills.” What she means is people with an agenda, what she means is people that do not

belong, what she means is women traveling alone, what she means is black women traveling alone to change things that don’t want changin’.

About two months into my research, I have a car accident on the interstate heading north. Up North in mountainous Tennessee, where the interstate becomes the stream that digs away at the economy of the rural, taking goods through and people and jobs out. It is a rural county with nothing left to lose and, so it seems, even less to gain. And as in most rural counties, most of the young men have left or taken one of two jobs: law or order. Even up in the mountains, a town of a 100 residents may sustain 12 lawyers, and every county has at least 20-30 different police officers because the work of arresting and suing never ends. When the trooper finally arrives an hour later, he tells me to get my “dang car off his innerstate.” It makes me wonder whether he believes me to be Wonder Woman because the car is totaled and missing a tire. Even the people who have stopped to help seem hostile – and also to all know each other. As I hand the trooper my passport and driver’s license, he looks at me funny and walks away. He returns with 3 citations, I briefly remember that I have rights too, and ask him, explaining that I am a foreigner, “What is going on.” His tone is harsh, “I am writing you up for having an accident for no reason.” A part of me wants to laugh out loud, that’s why they’re called accidents, after all, they may have a cause but usually lack reason.

Later, months after the accident, as I listen to Margo, I suddenly understand. I understand that while my accident had no particular reason, the trooper’s reaction had plenty. I think about my students at UT, how they all want to join the force, police force that is, because too many of their fathers and brothers died in the army. About, when I look back to it, that trooper was not much older than them. About how growing up in Appalachia teaches one to fear the outsider, especially the ones with a purpose. After all, they came and took: first they took land and game, then they took minerals and jobs, now they take people and money. They came and took security and dignity away from a proud and caring people. All they ever brought in return were rules, coal dust and an opioid crisis of epic proportions. Now, that might be inflating the truth and be little better than the wild tales, but it reflects so much of what drives the apparent hostility of Appalachia. It explains why I so often I feel out of place until I explain that I have come to listen, that I have come to understand, truly. I learn to share, not just my research but my story, my belonging to hills and hollers oceans away. I learn that bringing my mother to a Friday Fish Fry in Sneedville – “all the way from Germany to taste our fish – that’s what I call committing to a cause” – brings out the best in people, the same people that looked so grim in January and had sent me “down the holler to be safe.” I learn that people who come to change nothing and be far away from people are the ones that keep communities in the mountains alive. And I learn that the young man who was so overwhelmed by dealing with





a German lady crashing a car on his interstate is one less young man dying from the opioids, being handed out by the millions like candy, often by doctors who have neither the resources nor the options to really treat people.

Tennessee teaches me that the communities up in the mountains know solidarity, a solidarity that is based on shared experiences of hunger and mines, but also on shared hopes for continuity of their strange and hard way of life, stored away in the songs and legends of Appalachia. It also teaches me that they have good reason to not extend that solidarity beyond their hollers, and that still they more often do than don't. I see it when they pour coffee for the strange lady that cries at the counter of a Waffle House; when they mow the graveyard of black workers whose descendants have long left so they'll be able to find it if ever they come back to visit; when they pack their bags to protest against the development of sacred Cherokee mounds along their more Native brethren. Because they do know something of government overreach and what it means when good intentions backfire, they vote for a man who promises that all of that will stop, that



Washington will stop making decisions for people, and that the much-needed investments will start pouring in, finally replacing the government charity that robbed them of their dignity. Many of them know that this new administration, too, will not change things for the better, but perhaps, for once, it will also not make things worse. They could not have been more wrong, but then again, that too is just their daily bitter brew.

Solidarity does not come naturally to anyone, even less in the absence of a common dream. Solidarity has to be acquired and given, from two sides that are on equal footing. Two sides that can come together on equal terms, sharing at least some ideas about what a future could look like. Right now, America does not have that kind of common ground within its own borders, so we should not expect to find it outside of it. Picking either side in this battle is a dangerous game, as we risk to only further deepen the trenches; instead we should take the opportunity and question how much we truly understand, because no matter who wins, unless we confront and learn to endure the ambivalences of reality, the America that is going to emerge will know even less solidarity.

**Eva Rüskamp** is a writer and environmental scholar, splitting her time between Freiburg and Berlin. She is currently working on her dissertation about the role of cultural factors in environmental governance, focusing on rural areas in Germany and the US. Eva has just returned from her visiting scholarship at the University of Tennessee, which gave her the opportunity to research and teach in the region that originally inspired her to pursue doctoral studies on rural sustainability. M.A.Fulbright Travel Grant, 2011-12, University of Oregon

# Victors and Vanquished: A Lesson in Solidarity

by Harald Leder

## American Soldiers and Young Germans After World War II

In 1945 Germany and the Germans were facing an uncertain future. The country had just lost a second devastating war. Concentration Camps, the Holocaust and Germany's racial extermination policies in occupied territories had bankrupted any moral authority the country may have had. An occupation would need to be hard. American soldiers, however, consistently demonstrated an unexpected degree of solidarity with the civilian population, especially with young Germans. Their positive behavior had a profound impact on the attitude of many young Germans towards the United States after the war.

When American troops reached the German border in December 1944, the end of the war seemed to be imminent. First encounters between German civilians and the occupiers in Aachen were so friendly that they raised some concerns among commanding officers. But Hitler's last offense caused many casualties. Atrocities committed by German troops during the Battle of the Bulge and the discovery of concentration camps by American troops were all widely publicized. Allied Commander in Chief Dwight D. Eisenhower made sure to send all troops who were available to camps to show GIs what they were fighting for and what their enemy had been capable of. From February 1945 on all American troops were required to watch an official film – titled *Your Job in Germany* to prepare them for the occupation. Soldiers were informed that they were up against a German history of conquest, blood, and iron and could not let down their guard. Germans definitely were not their friends, so the film, and therefore soldiers should avoid all personal contact with Germans. The film instructed them to guard especially against young people who had grown up in the Third Reich, had been brainwashed and were prepared to cheat and use any means at their disposal to make sure that Nazi ideas would win in the end.

Nuremberg seemed to represent the Nazi ideology and Nazi Germany like no other place. Hitler had held his Nazi Party Rallies there; he had proclaimed the Nuremberg

Laws there in 1935 that officially established racism and discrimination against German Jews. They were the first official step by the German government to eliminate Jews from German society and led directly to the Holocaust. Surely American GIs would find it difficult to muster any sympathies with the population in a city that was so intertwined with National Socialism. In fact many GIs seemed to have no problem taking souvenirs from apartments or from unlucky civilians who happened to meet them on the streets when they first arrived. GIs and Soviet soldiers seemed to share a liking of German watches, even though the Americans just tended to take only the items and allowed their owners to leave.

However, many US soldiers from the start showed a surprising degree of solidarity with the civilian population when they began to occupy Germany. Countless Germans recalled long after the war, how GIs had left rations for families in basements, or went to fetch chocolate for the children, even when the fighting was still going on.

African American soldiers came to enjoy a special status among many young Germans in spite of the Nazis efforts to depict them as monsters and predators. They got the reputation of being especially friendly and generous to mothers and children. One mother's heart almost stopped when a black GI came up to her and asked her to hand over the baby she was carrying in her arms. She was expecting the worst, but the young man just held the baby and then gave it back without a problem. On another occasion an African American soldier entered a house while the fighting was still going on outside. After he had made sure that there were no German soldiers present, he relaxed, sat down on a chair and motioned one of the two little girls in the home to come closer and give him a kiss on the cheek. As reward he was dangling some goodies. The little sister caught on quickly, mustered her courage, gave the soldier the desired kiss on the cheek and was promptly rewarded. The older sister followed suit with the same effect.

1. This essay is based on parts of my dissertation and a forthcoming book.  
2. The film is readily available on Youtube  
3. For many Germans "USA" meant "Uhrensammlerarmee" or "Uhren stehlen's auch"



## A Lesson in Solidarity

After this episode the GI went on to fight German soldiers in the streets of Nuremberg. The Germans who remembered the soldiers’ kindness fifty years after the war probably did not realize that for these men the encounters may have been an important first step towards crossing racial barriers and fighting for their own liberation from racism in their segregated society.

Non-fraternization orders continued after the end of hostilities, but GIs had their own interpretations of the rules. General Eisenhower thought that by in large the soldiers obeyed non-fraternization orders during the first few months after the German surrender, but tended to ignore the order when it came to German children. It did not take long to lift that part of the ban. Eisenhower acknowledged that it was simply impossible to enforce because GIs could not find it in their hearts to ignore the German children’s obvious plight.

The lack of even basic items after the surrender made GIs very popular. They had everything a civilian could dream of, especially cigarettes which had replaced the German Mark as currency, but also food, blankets, even thread to sew clothes. And GIs tended to be generous. They paid handsomely for having their laundry done by German women or left packs of cigarettes if they caught a ride into town from a German civilian who was lucky enough to pass by with a company car.

Immediately after hostilities ended GIs began to play with children, introduced them to foreign games like Baseball or Basketball, and always seemed to have Hershey’s chocolate or chewing gum available for them. In December 1945 the American Military newspaper Stars and Stripes described the state of affairs between GIs and young Germans in humorous terms. Good natured soldiers on guard duty played with children. Others became victims of an angry mob of children because they had run out of chewing gum again. Christmas 1945 looked bleak for most Germans, but in the American Zone of Occupation many

GIs on their own initiative organized Christmas presents for families or individuals whom they had gotten to know a little. They started a tradition in the American Army in Germany which continued for long time.

African American clubs became popular hangouts for many young Germans who also learned to appreciate jazz and blues. German youngsters listened to the American Forces Network not just for the music, but also for the informal way radio was done by young people for young people. German and American officials frequently noted the close bond African American GIs seemed to form with many young Germans. From the German perspective they were their most reliable partners, even when it came to black market deals. Both, German authorities and the US Army did not look upon those relationships kindly, but they were unable to stop them.

The Army picked up on the soldiers’ initiatives. By mid-1946 it established its own German Youth Activities (GYA) program to help young people pass their free time in a meaningful way with American soldiers. In a complete reversal of non-fraternization, Soldiers now were actively encouraged to reach out to young Germans. Army posts opened youth centers which welcomed everyone, regardless of their social status, their past, or that of their parents.

In Nuremberg tens of thousands of children attended film nights in the requisitioned opera house the army used as a club throughout the 1940s, while the German authorities complained that they were not able to use the facility for its intended purpose. In 1947-48 about 400,000 children attended GYA activities in the US Zone every month, with a peak of almost 800,000 in December. 389 Army personnel took care of them in every town with an Army post, aided by 1,056 German employees and over 1,200 military and civilian volunteers. Children learned to build their own soap box race cars which they were able to test in popular competitions across the American zone.



Harald Leder with wife Luzmaria whom he met at LSU in 1985 and son Alexander in their home in in Baton Rouge, January 2018

## Conclusion

American policy makers during and after World War II considered Germans as enemies, but many GIs decided to ignore this policy for humanitarian reasons, even before the German surrender. They had every reason not to help, but displayed sympathy and generosity on a very personal level that also had a positive impact on official policy. Their informal, friendly ways of dealing with Germans laid the groundwork for a positive relationship between the occupiers and the occupied. It is important for us to remember the lessons learned: Help those in need. Do not wait for the government to do something. Generosity in a material sense, lending a helping hand without asking questions and community engagement are decisions that must be taken on a personal level. However, these individual choices can alleviate or even change political decisions and bureaucratic hurdles. Senator Fulbright may have taken a page from the GIs’ playbook when he established the program in 1947 that still carries his name. As Fulbright alumni we have an obligation to continue this tradition. As Germans many of us are now in a position to follow the personal examples that so many American soldiers and their families set in Germany after World War II.

### Harald Leder

With the help of a Fulbright scholarship he spent 1985-87 at Louisiana State University, where he received a Master’s degree in history and examined the interaction between the United States, Germany, and Latin American countries before and during World War I. He now works for LSU as Director of the Office of Academic Programs Abroad, continues to be actively engaged in bringing Americans and Germans together, and still conducts research on the history of German-American relations.

4. The activities of the US Military Government and private agencies are well documented. Less well known is the role the US Army played during the occupation. I want to focus on the personal side of the occupation.  
5. The official explanation for this phenomenon was rooted in racism and stereotyping. American officials thought that those bonds were simply a reflection of the childlike souls African Americans supposedly possessed.

6. The US Army officially maintained segregated facilities until the 1950s.  
De facto White and African American GIs frequented different Clubs well into the 70s.



# What Being a Fulbrighter Taught Me

by Benita Pungwe

Four years ago was the first time I travelled to the USA with a Fulbright scholarship. I had just graduated from high school and was very enthusiastic about the path that lay ahead of me. It was also the first time I gained confidence in myself and my abilities because I was surrounded by 24 other scholars from all over Germany, with whom I spent four weeks at the University of Kentucky for a summer school program. It is cliché to say that it changed my life, the way I perceived myself, and my position in this world, but in a way this is true: the four weeks were very enriching and enhanced my desire to study for a longer period at a US university. This time around I'm in San Francisco by myself pursuing my Master's degree. I guess it's right what they say: once a Fulbrighter, always a Fulbrighter.

Being a Fulbrighter means that you will eventually meet hundreds of other Fulbrighters along your Fulbright journey at many different gatherings. Hearing various stories from people with diverse backgrounds is very enriching because it builds a sense of empathy within us, since we learn to understand the journey of others. We ultimately develop compassion regarding the experiences of people around us, which is crucial when establishing solidarity. I can say from my experience that I have learned quite a few different layers that shape solidarity.

Especially in the current global political climate where the world has been polarized through ethnic and civic nationalist movements it becomes more important to stand with the ones who are being targeted. The negative portrayal of 'the Other' is now common in news reports, which contribute to shaping the mindset of a large part of the population. As Fulbrighters, we, more than ever, have the great responsibility to be cultural ambassadors in our host as well as home countries, to share our experiences with the world, and to show solidarity with those who are subject to xenophobia and other sorts of oppression.

In the following I will summarize the most important lessons I have learned as a Fulbrighter throughout my journey, which I believe can be practical to developing solidarity amongst different communities:

## Shifting perspectives

Meeting other Fulbrighters from around the world who study and research in various professional fields made me realize that regardless of my study focus, it is important to keep an open mind on different and foreign topics. Studying International Relations from the US perspective gives me a unique and interesting insight on understanding complex geopolitical issues. Not only am I being challenged in my own world views, but for the past academic year I have learned a lot on approaching political and economic issues from a different lens than I would have been able to, had I stayed in Europe. I am more than grateful to be in class with people from a range of nationalities whose different backgrounds shape their opinions in classroom discussions. The learning experience goes beyond course books and teachings: it takes place through cultural exchange and the sharing of our adventures.

Cultural exchange is one of the vital aspects that comes with the Fulbright Program, if not the main reason for the existence of the program aside from academic exchange. I live with three other Americans in an apartment and there we not only share a common living space, but we share our life experiences as well as differences of our home countries. In conversations we realize how alike our cultures are and the similar ways in which our societies work. We are also surprised and fascinated by the different ways of living in other countries. My American friends, for example, can't grasp the fact that I can basically study for free in Germany or that barely anyone has small talks in public spaces with complete strangers, as is the case in California. At the same time, I will never understand how someone can work four jobs before finding 'the right opportunity' and still struggles to survive while claiming he has freedom of choice. And I guess I will never cease to be perplexed after seeing the gun collection of a friend and his readiness to use it 'in case of an emergency'.

We may not see eye to eye on certain issues and not fully understand each other's cultures, but that is not the point of it all; the most important thing is having the conversations that I have been having with people in this country as well as with other Fulbrighters from around the world. Through these conversations we shape our understanding and learn to perceive other cultures with an open mind, while additionally learning to be critical of our own.



## Giving back

Most importantly, during this journey I realized that it is not only about me. I have reevaluated my role and obligation in society. My Fulbright journey is supposed to impact people in my host country (the US) and the experiences I have gained should inspire me to help shape my community back home. Community service has been emphasized by Fulbright many times during my stay in San Francisco. I was inspired to give back to the community that is hosting me, which is why I have found time to volunteer at food kitchens in San Francisco, and in Philadelphia I participated in an art preparation project for migrant children. My journey and achievements are not about me, which is why I am part of something bigger to help inspire individuals around me to be more empathetic towards people from other nations and their cultures.

## We may have different journeys, but we are actually not that different

The Fulbright spirit is a special sentiment that I always embrace when I'm around fellow Fulbrighters. From the first moment of being in the Fulbright environment, I feel that no matter my national background, I do matter and so does my story. The diversity of people and numbers of nationalities in a room is always astonishing. Diversity is a key aspect of the Fulbright spirit, which makes the program so special. At the same time, I believe that diversity should not be seen as something cool or a trend but rather as a reflection of the world we live in. Trends come and go but diversity, as well as solidarity, is not a new denim outfit or an "in" print blouse. The blog page "fulbrightnoir" is an Instagram page that shares the stories of the few black scholars in the Fulbright program. I appreciate the platform because of the space it creates for black and brown people to express their experiences. I decided to also share my story through that specific platform because the reality is that even the Fulbright platform doesn't always represent or recognize that Fulbrighters will have varying experiences during their Fulbright journey due to their skin color, religion, or sexual orientation. Fulbright Germany has its own amazing 'Diversity Program,' which enables students with migration backgrounds to participate in a summer school program at a university in the United States, which

I was part of in 2014. At the same time, I was awarded with the scholarship for a Masters program three years later and there, I found I was the only black person out of more than 150 German grantees in 2017/18. I write that to say that it is nice to acknowledge the diversity in a society through a specific program designed for this purpose, however when it comes to the general admission processes, minorities see a lack of acknowledgement and representation. For the future, I hope that the Fulbright Program can embrace diversity in admission processes as well as factoring in the experiences its grantees undergo on the basis of their backgrounds: I hope in doing so, they will use the basic principle of solidarity to support their scholars. These differences in experiences do not, however, imply that we are completely different per se. One thing I learned profoundly from being a Fulbrighter is that our diverse national and geographical backgrounds do not divide us and are not the reason for our differences. I love the fact that I always get to meet people from every corner of the globe and find that we all have so much in common. This is how I have developed many great friendships within the program, since I can always have casual but also deep conversations with people from the other side of the world. Through these interactions I have also realized that for as many differing opinions there are, there are many like-minded people with a similar mindset as mine. A characterizing image I still have from the time in Kentucky back then, and also from the Enrichment Seminar in Philadelphia this year, is that both times I was hanging out in one of my friend's hotel rooms and their roommate was in their room praying. Despite our presence, they felt safe and comfortable enough in that environment to do their daily prayer while we were sitting around enjoying each other's company. For me this image is so powerful because we all felt relaxed in each other's presence, regardless of our different religious beliefs, which at the end of the day, are ultimately unimportant to the bigger picture.

## Benita Pungwe

Fulbright scholar in San Francisco, at San Francisco State University studying in M.A. International Relations







PowWows / Focus Conferences

Different regional chapters of our Association organize several national conferences and seminars every year, usually covering a specific topic.

A selection of past events:

- 2014 International Fulbright Conference “Entrepreneurs in a Borderless World,” Berlin
- 2011 The German Fulbright Alumni Association at 25: Shaping a Changing World, Berlin
- 2009 change(a)crisis, Munich
- 2007 Climate Change, Erlangen
- 2005 J. William Fulbright Centennial, Frankfurt
- 2004 EU Enlargement, Berlin
- 2002 Quo vadis USA, Berlin
- 2001 Nutrition, Calw
- 1999 Biotechnology, Frauenchiemsee
- 1998 Intercultural Communications, Frankfurt
- 1997 Managing Public Organizations, Frankfurt
- 1996 A Chance for Global Understanding, Berlin
- 1995 Environmental Strategy, Heidenheim
- 1994 Where is our New Frontier? Stuttgart
- 1993 Market Leadership and Brand Names, Böblingen
- 1992 Health, Cologne
- 1991 German Reunification and the Future of German-American Relations, Berlin
- 1990 Signs for Tomorrow’s Architecture, Landscape, and Urban Development, Darmstadt
- 1989 The French Revolution in American and German Perspectives, Regensburg
- 1988 The United States and Germany: Corporate Cultures in Comparison, Mannheim

History and Purpose

The German Fulbright Alumni e.V. was founded in Frankfurt in 1986 by former Fulbrighters and now has over 1,200 members. The Association is guided by the ideas of the program’s founder, Senator J. William Fulbright, to bring together people of different nations to contribute to world peace through better international understanding.

The Association gathers globally minded students, scholars, and practitioners of a wide range of academic fields and professional expertise. Most of our members have spent a Fulbright year in the United States, and the Fulbright Alumni e.V. serves as the platform for which former grantees can continue to promote and work toward global understanding. We are committed to diversity, acceptance, and true internationality and perpetually strive to encourage further education regarding others’ customs, histories, and challenges.

Based on personal and academic experiences and insights gained through participation in an international exchange program, the fundamental tenets of the mission of German Fulbright Alumni e.V. members are the following:

- to strengthen and support cross-cultural contacts and exchange between Fulbrighters from all over the world
- to encourage dialogue and interaction between international scholars, experts, and activists on topics important to the political, social, and cultural life of our societies

In promoting its political support for the Fulbright program, our Association maintains close but independent contact with the Fulbright Commission in Berlin to support the German-American Fulbright program.

The Fulbright Alumni e.V. is supported solely by its members. Grants and contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals are welcomed.

Activities

Based on a young, lively, and broad-based membership, our Association organizes a diverse range of regional and nation-wide events. Admission is reduced for members of the Association, but all events are open to guests and members of partner organizations.

National Events

The Fulbright Alumni e.V. organizes a series of national events every year in order to realize the goals mentioned above. Equally important are the exchanges fostered among our members and interdisciplinary discussions on current issues.

General Assembly & Winter Ball

Every year, all members are invited to the General Assembly. At the Assembly, each board member reports on his or her activities during the year, followed by the election of a new board. After the General Assembly, the Winter Ball takes place to mark another year in celebration.

Welcome Meeting

Each Fall, the Welcome Meeting offers an exciting opportunity for contacts and networking. Our main goal is to welcome back German returnees as well as get to know American Fulbrighters just embarking on their Fulbright experience in Germany. The meetings foster discussion forums to address issues relevant to those newly returned from a year abroad and jointly serve as an introduction to the Fulbright family beyond the exchange year.

Strategy Meeting

At the Strategy Meeting, the most devoted core of our members gather to discuss the present and future of the Association we all hold so dear.

Sailing Trip

“Bright People under Full Sail”: International sailing trips on the Baltic Sea have been organized every two years since 1991.

Family Weekend

Our yearly summer event, which has been held in Saxony since 2000, is primarily geared towards families with children – however, anyone is welcome to join as a member of the Fulbright family!

Regional Chapter Activities

Regional chapters organize more informal cultural and social events on a monthly basis, including lectures, discussions, and *Stammtische*. To find out about the next *Stammtisch* in your area, contact the regional coordinators listed to the right. Other typical events open to everyone include movies, outdoor activities, and cultural events. Of course, we also celebrate American holidays, such as Independence Day and Thanksgiving.

International Activities

Our Association places emphasis on strengthening personal contacts among Fulbright alumni from around the world. Some core activities are listed here:

- 2017 Fulbright Association 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.
- 2016 ENAM Conference “Energy, Renewables & Sustainability” in Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2016 Water Act! Heritage and Innovation Symposium, Ifrane/Morocco
- 2016 Fulbright Association 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.
- 2015 International Fulbright Conference “Water Act”, Paris
- 2015 Fulbright Association 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Atlanta
- 2014 Fulbright Association 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.
- 2013 Fulbright Association 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.
- 2012 Fulbright Association 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in London
- 2012 1<sup>st</sup> ENAM Annual Conference in Rome
- 2010 Fulbright Association 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference, Buenos Aires
- 2008 Fulbright Association 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference, Beijing
- 2006 Fulbright Association 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Marrakesh
- 2004 The International Interdisciplinary Fulbright Conference, Olympism and the Fulbright Spirit: Humanism in Action, Athens
- 2000 3<sup>rd</sup> European Fulbright Alumni Workshop, Toledo

Our Services

The Association publishes the national journal, the *FRANKly*, every fall, as well as an Alumni Membership Directory. As a service to the general public, the national office provides information and assistance to any private person, university, or institution on questions of cultural and academic exchange with the United States. Each regional chapter contacts and assists American Fulbright visiting scholars in its local area. For further information, please contact our national office in Frankfurt or one of our officers listed here.

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# Harnessing Innovation and Change

by Sydney Stewart

From April 15 - 18, I had the honor and pleasure of representing Fulbright Germany (alongside Jeremy McGale, a fellow US Student grantee) at the 2017-2018 EU-US Seminar for Young Leaders in Brussels, Belgium.

The Young Leaders Seminar is the brainchild of Erika Lutes, the Executive Director of Fulbright Belgium/Luxembourg/Schuman. Each year, twenty-five American and twenty-five European exchange program participants and alumni are invited to the Belgian and European capital to tackle the world's most pressing and complex questions. In April, we gathered to discuss the "Future of Work". Our discussion topics included the changing nature of the workplace, the use of robots and artificial intelligence to perform repetitive or low-skill tasks, the pros and cons of a universal basic income system, and the re-skilling and re-education of at-risk workers.

I remember reading through the seminar program and being completely overwhelmed by terms such as "platform economy" and "OECD;" my background in economics and policy was strictly limited to the context of animal agriculture, and seeing my name next to the likes of EU policy officers made me feel a bit like a fish out of water. At the opening dinner on Sunday night, however, I had the chance to meet the other participants, many of whom also had projects totally unrelated to the topic of employment. The idea, as Erika Lutes later explained, was to bring an equal number of "experts" and "non-experts" together, and to encourage a true educational and cultural exchange by introducing as many perspectives as possible.

The next two days were a whirlwind of presentations, small-group sessions, and speeches delivered by various representatives from the US Mission to the EU. In the span of 48 hours, I watched a group of mostly strangers – all from wildly different educational and cultural backgrounds, with specialties ranging from youth employment to computational chemistry to organized crime in Eastern Europe – put their heads together and come up with a concrete set of suggestions for harnessing innovation



and change. But the most interesting and memorable part of the Seminar was not its intellectual content, nor was it the audacity of 50 young scientists, scholars, and professionals to spend two days tackling an issue that world governments have struggled with for years; it was the fact that many of our best and boldest ideas were developed outside of the Commission's regularly-scheduled programming.

From time to time, educational and cultural exchange actually does look like a panel of experts answering the questions of a curious and captive audience, or a passionate debate between scholars during a breakout session. But more often than not, it looks like a group of young adults packed together around a table (sometimes in a reception room at the US Mission to the EU, sometimes at the famous Delirium Café – in our case, it was both, on a warm and clear Monday night), sampling local beers and swapping stories about our time abroad.

Senator William J. Fulbright's dream of a world with "a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion" may have its roots in the lecture hall and conference room, but in my time as a Fulbright Fellow, I've seen it most clearly and obviously realized in a crowded, cozy pub in Marburg on our first night of orientation; on the U-Bahn back to the hotel after a long walking tour of Berlin; and in Brussels' Grand Place at midnight, while looking up at a beautifully illuminated city hall. The most meaningful, memorable, and inspiring exchanges – the ones that inspire the solidarity and camaraderie for which the Fulbright Program is known, and from which potentially world-changing ideas and collaborations originate – are those that occur in unexpected places, at unexpected times, with unexpected people.

It was an honor to represent Fulbright Germany at this year's Young Leaders Seminar. I want to thank the Fulbright Belgium Commission for the invitation to

participate, for their hospitality throughout our stay in Brussels, and for the opportunity to meet 49 incredible, inspiring young leaders who give me a lot of hope for and faith in the future.

**Sydney Stewart** is a 2017/2018 Fulbright US Student grantee based at Uni-Bonn's Institut für Tierwissenschaften (Institute for Animal Sciences), where she works on projects related to livestock health and farm biosecurity. The Dallas, Texas native holds a bachelor's degree in animal science from Oklahoma State University, and will return to her alma mater in August 2018 to begin a PhD in animal health.







# Greeting the Returning German Fulbrighters and Welcoming the Incoming American Grantees

by Hannah Baxter

I confess that I didn't really know what I was getting into when I walked up to the Katholische Stiftungsfachhochschule on Friday night for the first official event of the weekend: a wine reception. A fellow Fulbrighter whom I had gotten to know at orientation was with me and after wandering around for a short while searching for the correct building, we heard the murmur of voices and saw the company of current and former Fulbrighters. We got ourselves some wine and dove in. After a welcome by the 2017-2018 President of the German Fulbright Alumni Association, Vanessa Wergin, and the Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission, Dr. Oliver Schmidt, we spent the evening reconnecting with familiar faces from orientation as well as meeting new ones. As an ETA working in Munich, it was particularly exciting to have the chance to meet and connect with not only the former Fulbrighters who live in the area, but also with the researchers in the city, who were also just beginning their Fulbright year. Filled with pizza and anticipation for the coming days, the night came to a close, though the conversations were far from over.

## SATURDAY

The next morning, we were up bright and early, at the main building of Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU) – a fitting location because, as the day

would prove, we were hungry to learn from one another and were ready to share our experiences. We began with a keynote speech delivered by Public Affairs Officer Stephen Ibelle from the U.S. Consulate in Munich. His stories about working and living in multiple locations around the world were not only fascinating, but also instilled in us the inspiration to always maintain a curiosity for new cultures and foreign languages throughout our lives.

It was a beautiful fall day – warm and sunny – so for the next event we took the party outside where we continued to network and get to know each other with the help of some icebreakers. During one activity, we sorted ourselves by home state and Fulbright placement, both in Germany and in the US. Suddenly, the world seemed incredibly small – separated by an ocean, yet brought together by familiar locations. As the gong rang out that signaled the end of each activity, it became apparent just how difficult it was to get Fulbrighters to stop socializing and talking with one another.

After lunch, we heard from a number of former Fulbrighters who shared their stories with passion, particularly emphasizing the importance of maintaining and building relationships. To finish off the day, we broke into groups to attend various workshops on a range of topics from



shaping the future of the Fulbright community to workshops dealing specifically with teaching. In one workshop we focused on leadership across cultures; we discussed the numerous definitions and traits of leaders while looking at how these characteristics surface in the expectations society holds of leadership around the world.

## SATURDAY EVENING

It was a packed day, and we were all feeling hungry and ready to enjoy the evening that had been planned for us. First on the list was dinner at Park Café. We still had a little time to kill before the restaurant was ready for us, so a group of us found a spot in a nearby park and took some more time to enjoy the sun and chat. The food was delicious and the conversation was, too! Soon enough, our bellies were full, and we were ready to show off our dance moves at the club Americanos.

## SUNDAY

One of the definite highlights of the weekend was taking part in an “unconference” at the Künstlerhaus on Sunday morning. There had been a teaser for the event during the previous day, but most of us were still unsure of what to expect. The idea was that it would be a conference that “broke the rules” outside the traditional conference format. In an “unconference” the participants have the control: it was up to us to decide the agenda, topics of discussion, and the organization and flow of the event. Armed with our unconference cheat sheets and a few ideas for possible sessions, we officially began. A few brave souls volunteered to pitch their ideas for sessions, and we decided, based on interest, in which group we wished to participate. We had the opportunity to engage in conversations about building the Fulbright community, political situations, our current and past Fulbright

adventures, and strategies for language learning and self-care. There was even a session devoted to improv games! Each 30-minute session was over before we knew it.

For me, the “unconference” was a perfect snapshot that captured the atmosphere of the entire weekend – a group of people with diverse experiences and backgrounds, who all brought something special to the group as a whole. The weekend was driven by the community and its success as a unique event as a whole was a result of not only the lovely people who planned it, but also as a result of the wonderful individuals who took part. From new friends to new ideas, I think I can safely say that everyone walked away with something more. When we left on that Sunday afternoon, there seemed to be a palpable sense of gratefulness and excitement for what the future would hold.

**Hannah Baxter** studied German and teaching English as a second language as an undergraduate and then went on to receive her M.Ed. and teaching licences in German and ESL at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. She now works as a Fulbright ETA at three schools in Munich and is looking forward to continuing her adventure in Germany for another year with the PAD before returning to the United States to share all she has learned with her future students.



All photos by Marion Schweighart





# A Voyage to “Die Perle des Nordens” (the pearl of the north)

by David Patrician

Over the past few years the Hamburg regional chapter had often joked about hosting the Winterball. We finally decided to place a bid to host this prestigious event, and were thrilled to be chosen as the location for the 2018 Fulbright Alumni Winterball! From the start, our motto was: “Wenn schon...denn schon! – If we are going to do this...Let’s REALLY go for it!” Looking back, I think we succeeded.

On Friday afternoon around 60 Fulbrighters (in two groups) took a tour of the US Consulate located on the scenic Alster Lake. Dr. Heiko Herold, Information and Program Specialist for the US Consulate Hamburg, gave the Fulbrighters a fascinating tour full of history and stories. One interesting fact was that in 1790, President George Washington established the US Consulate in Hamburg as the eleventh American diplomatic mission worldwide. It was clear early on that Hamburg, and its international sea port, was destined to play an important role in the transatlantic relationship. We also would like to thank US Consul General Rick Yoneoka for personally welcoming us to the Consulate and sharing some stories about life in the foreign service ... it was a great way to start off the weekend!

As evening approached, over one hundred Fulbrighters gathered at the Hamburger Veermaster for dinner and drinks. Located on the Reeperbahn, in the heart of the

St. Pauli district, the Veermaster resembles the inside of an old sailing ship, and with a little imagination (and maybe a beer or two), you can easily envision yourself on the decks of an old sailboat crossing the Atlantic. For those with extra energy to burn, there were plenty of options around the corner to continue conversations, grab a drink and further explore the Kiez, also known to locals as “die sündigste Meile.”

The next morning it was time to get down to business – the Alumni General Meeting. We met at the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) in downtown Hamburg. A special thank you to Dr. Karolina Vöge, Director of the KAS in Hamburg, and her team for hosting our group for this important meeting. A variety of issues, ranging from membership dues to new board elections, were discussed and voted on. The general meeting was also a great opportunity to pitch new ideas, get updates about other regional chapters and help plan future events for the Alumni Association. The meeting finished around 4 pm and then it was time to get ready for the highlight of the weekend: The Winterball!

The iconic Atlantic Hotel Kempinski was the location of this year’s Winterball. Featured in the 1997 James Bond film, “Tomorrow Never Dies,” the Atlantic is one of Hamburg’s most famous locations. In 1909 the hotel opened its doors



as a Grand Hotel for the passengers of the luxurious ocean liners. It was a place to do business, meet prominent guests, host special events ... and the perfect place to host the Fulbright Alumni Winterball!

To start the evening off, guests were able to grab a drink at the cocktail bar while listening to traditional German sailor songs played by a local accordion player. At one point, the entire room gathered together to sing the traditional shanty song, “Wir lagen vor Madagaskar.” It was one of those special moments that is simply hard to capture in words. The doors to the ballroom opened and local musicians Giovanni White and Benjamin Wiegand performed while guests took pictures and found their seats. After I gave some opening remarks, US Consul General Rick Yoneoka gave an inspiring speech about the importance of the transatlantic relationship. Afterwards our guest of honor, John Hensel, told us a few stories about his Fulbright experience back in 1953. When he left Germany for his Fulbright exchange the ship voyage lasted 8 days! Coming from war torn Germany, he fell in love with America, as well as with his wife Catrina. John ended up settling down in the US, but flew in from Florida to attend his first Fulbright Winterball ... now that is alumni spirit!

“The buffet is now open”... always welcome words on such an evening. After a great dinner it was time to dance.

DJ Chris Reger started the evening off with a traditional Viennese Walz, and then played everything from ABBA to Justin Timberlake! To top that off, a few Fulbrighters bumped into legendary German rocker Udo Lindenberg. When not on tour, he lives in the Atlantic Hotel and is proud to call Hamburg home. It was a wonderful evening and with over 240 Fulbrighters and guests, it was also one of the largest winter balls ever organized.

The next morning Fulbrighters had two options: some met at the Landungsbrücken for the “Brunch on the Elbe,” a two hour boat tour of the Hamburg Harbor including brunch and coffee (and many certainly needed their coffee that morning!), while others took a private tour of the Hamburg Rathaus (City Hall) where they learned about the history of the building, as well as about the city of Hamburg. As the clock struck noon in the Rathaus, the Hamburg Winterball weekend slowly came to an end. It was time for goodbyes and to head back home.

I would like to take this moment to once again thank my 2018 Hamburg Fulbright Winterball Organizing Team: Lorenz Eichhorn, Kay Dethlefs, Alex Swanson, Charlotte Horn, Magnus Dorsch, Esther Taubert, Kayleen Hannigan and Laura Burns. Great job!!!  
Wenn schon – denn schon ☺

All photos by Marcus Schmidt





# The Times They Are a-Changin’

by Liz Joyce

The 2018 Fulbright Berlin Conference began by showcasing Fulbright’s most remarkable asset: the Fulbrighters. Over light snacks at the Hotel Riu Plaza Berlin, old friends caught up and new friendships formed. Discussion switched back and forth between German and English, and the topics ranged from casual small talk to deep analyses of social issues. These first several hours of conversation created a feeling of excited anticipation; amidst so many captivating people, incredible and insightful memories were guaranteed to form in the coming days.

The Fulbrighters then took an easy walk across the street to the official Welcome Ceremony at Urania Center. Dr. Oliver Schmidt, Executive Director of the German-American Fulbright Commission in Berlin, moderated for second year running, and he introduced the conference’s theme: “The Times They Are a-Changin’,” a fitting theme in today’s political climate. This was followed by Dr. Schmidt, Paola Sartori (Fulbright Italy), and Arnaud Roujou de Boublee (Fulbright France) engaging in a brief, but quite entertaining panel honoring the 70th anniversary of the Fulbright Programs in Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, and the UK. The German Fulbright Alumni Association followed by highlighting the ways in which alumni continue to benefit from Fulbright. Between the presentations, we enjoyed artistic performances from current grantees. The welcome evening

wrapped up with dinner and excited chatter. But the night didn’t end there; that Saturday was St. Patrick’s Day, and numerous grantees wound up at an Irish Pub together, where the conversation and fun continued.

Sunday morning kicked off with one Fulbrighter from each of the five countries celebrating their 70<sup>th</sup> Fulbright anniversary, giving a brief overview of their respective project. Unique traits of each country, such as the artistic scenes of France or the pedagogical past of Greece, shaped the implementation and progression of the grantees’ projects, and consequently their entire European experience. Most of the grantees attending the conference were either German or Americans living in Germany, so the narratives from the other five countries and the differences they uncovered were striking. Dr. Schmidt and Dr. Jackson Janes, President of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, immediately followed these presentations by building upon this idea of culture influencing experience. In a panel titled “Cultural Sensitivity,” the two discussed contrasts in values and lifestyle on both sides of the Atlantic, and the issues that can arise as a result.

# BERLIN



of presentations given by other grantees, professors, businessmen/women, and other individuals. Everyone had an opportunity to select topics that they found particularly stimulating, including but not limited to, the

creation and use of the Stasi archives, the rapidly increasing popularity of Bitcoin, and modern day theater in Berlin.

Eventually everyone reconvened at the University of the Arts (UdK) for the official Fulbright Ceremony. A mass of grantees, alumni, and esteemed guests sat down to hear Prof. Dr. Heinz Bude from the University of Kassel address, “How to Heal (Not Only Save) Democracy.” He stressed the need for active involvement in politics, and concluded that everyone should be optimistic, not hopeful. He clarified this seemingly contradictory statement by underscoring the importance of believing that though a better future is possible, it will not happen on its own. After his speech, representatives from the German and American governments gave brief remarks, followed by three grantees who gave presentations outlining their research. They achieved the remarkable feat of not only having incredible projects, but also making biology, education, and physics comprehensible and fun for everyone in attendance. In addition, a German alumna briefly spoke about her time in the US, discussing what it was like to be a German Muslim in America, and how that influenced her perception of her German identity. The Fulbright Jazz Ensemble, a self-founded group of Fulbright alumni, serenaded the audience in between these presentations as well as during the reception that followed.

During “Cultural Sensitivity,” several Fulbrighters noticed that although dissimilarities between Germany and the US were highlighted, there was little to no discussion of the demographic variation of Fulbrighters and how one’s demographic influences the individual’s time in a foreign country. The Fulbrighters who saw this, brought it to attention of the German Fulbright Commission and after an afternoon of grant-specific seminars, decided to host an impromptu seminar titled “Cultural Sensitivity 2.0.” The seminar provided a rare opportunity for frank and open communication about the difficulties that grantees, particularly those of color, encounter while immersing themselves in a foreign culture. The stories shared in this seminar were moving, sometimes shocking, and extremely valuable to hear; hopefully there will be a continuation and expansion of this kind of discourse in future Fulbright events.

Monday resumed with Dr. Cornelia Schu, Managing Director of the SVR and Director of the Expert Council’s Research Unit, presenting on the status of migration in Germany. She focused on logistical issues, moral complications, and how the situation can be improved going forward. Her talk marked a transition in the focus of the conference from a reflection on culture to an examination of current events. This was very apparent in the rest of Monday’s programming; grantees chose between a variety

All photos by Fulbright-Kommission/David Ausserhofer



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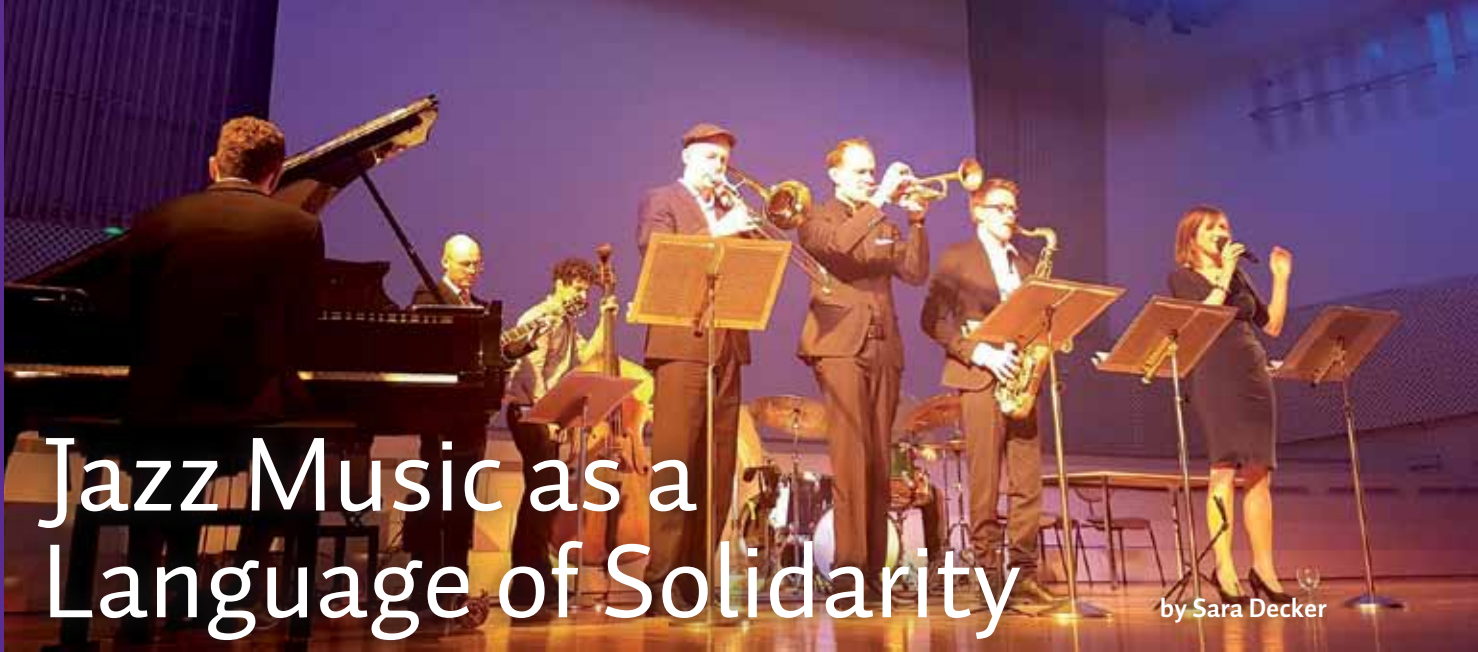


The last full day of the conference had a very different format than those preceding it. The grantees convened outside the Rote Rathaus (Red Town Hall) to write down their hopes for the future of international exchange, attach these hopes to balloons, and release the balloons into the Berlin skies. The hundreds of balloons created a striking pop of color on the snowy morning. Afterwards, everyone gratefully scurried into the Rathaus for a Q&A session with Sawsan Chebli, a State of Berlin Delegate to the German Federation. Ms. Chebli provided insight into what it's like to be part of German politics in the current environment. She discussed being a woman of color, changes in domestic and international attitudes, the makeup of the Bundestag (German Parliament), and numerous other topics. After grilling Ms. Chebli for an hour with questions, grantees split for tours of Berlin by Fulbrighters who live in the city. The tours catered to diverse aspects of life and culture in Berlin, allowing everyone to explore an aspect of the city they found particularly intriguing. Tuesday night saw the official end of the conference at Alte Pumpe. Grantees ate, talked, and danced until after midnight; even some of the program moderators loosened their ties and joined in on the dancefloor. Everyone was able to unwind and spend a final evening with the new friends they had made.



"The Times They Are a-Changin' " is a lyric from Bob Dylan's 1964 hit. Dylan wrote the song in reflection of society's desire for change. Jump to 2018, this desire seems especially relevant again. The past few years have seen political shifts across the globe, leaving many uncertain exactly how to process or respond to a changing world. By choosing Dylan's lyric as this year's conference theme, the coordinators hoped to address said uncertainty. While the presentations and seminars did help address this, it was the conversations with fellow grantees outside the realm of the official events that I found particularly helpful. When such thoughtful, insightful, and driven individuals are so concerned about current issues, one can't help but be optimistic about how the times will be a-changing in the future.

**Liz Joyce** is a research grantee for the 2017-2018 year, exploring the genetic basis of cataracts at the Helmholtz Zentrum in Munich. Outside of her research, she volunteers with a refugee organization and takes advantage of Germany's train system to travel as much as possible. Next year she'll be headed to University of Michigan in Ann Arbor to pursue an MD.



## Jazz Music as a Language of Solidarity

by Sara Decker

This year's seminar in Berlin was a premiere for the Fulbright Jazz Ensemble. With 9 musicians, all Fulbright alumni and grantees from all over the world, we created the first "Fulbright Jazz Ensemble" to perform at the ceremony in Berlin. I was lucky enough to be part of this stellar ensemble as a vocalist, and had the chance to perform and arrange some of my original music with them.

We all met for the first time the night before the ceremony to play a concert at the Salon am Moritzplatz, which helped us get to know each other personally, as well as musically. Our guitarist, Hagen Moeller from Berlin, did an amazing job in organizing the whole group! It was astonishing to see how – without even knowing each other – everybody was on the same page. Our drummer had come straight from Ireland, the trumpet player from Munich, and I made the trek from New York. Despite our hectic travel schedules, all of these different musicians were willing to share two intense days of music making.

This, for me, was the first act of solidarity. We did not know each other, but we came together from all over the world, open-minded and ready to create music together. In addition to a great deal of professionalism and high-level musical craft, this requires a specific mindset and particular personality from the entire group: mainly the willingness to communicate, to create together, and to share ideas.

The next level of communication and solidarity follows in the music making and in the performance. To me, jazz music is very democratic. Every instrument has their own liberty and space to improvise, and no one is more important than the other. Everyone has to be present and listen intently in order to let the music shine. This is a very powerful and fascinating way of not only communicating, but also of expressing solidarity.

The last step results in the performance and in the sharing of the music with an audience, which in this case was during

the ceremony of the Annual Berlin Seminar in the Universität der Künste (University of the Arts) concert hall: a very special and marvelous experience!

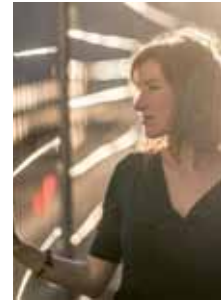
I think what we learn from this kind of event is that the only way to shape the future nowadays is to communicate, meet with new people, create together, and take responsibility for what happens around us. I'm looking forward to the next time when we come together from all over the world to join as the "Fulbright Jazz Ensemble" to create beautiful music!

The 'Fulbright Jazz Ensemble' features some of today's most prominent voices of the international jazz scene.

### Members of The Fulbright Jazz Ensemble are:

- Tom Berkman, Bass, Berlin
- Sara Decker, Vocals, New York City
- Felix Fromm, Trombone, Mannheim
- Julian Hesse, Trumpet, Munich
- Matthew Jacobson, Drums, Ireland
- Hagen Moeller, Guitar, Berlin
- Ben Morris, Piano, Denmark
- Stefan Karl Schmid, Saxophone, Cologne
- Martin Terens, Piano, Berlin

**Sara Decker** New York based, German artist Sara Decker is a contemporary jazz vocalist and composer, specializing in merging pop styles with improvisational jazz artistry. Known for her subtle tone, impressive range and heartfelt story-telling, she recently won the 2nd prize at the distinguished Shure Montreux Jazz Voice Competition 2017 and the European Jazz Award Italy (2015). She is just releasing her sophomore album "Long distance" as well as performing in prestigious jazz venues and festivals across Europe and the United States.





# Falling for Munich, Slamming Science in Berlin

Chemist Tackles Toxic Bisphenol A Pollution to Clean Water for Life by Lauren Davidson

*“The mountains are calling and I must go.”*

Though I had not really been to Munich before, I packed my bags when Fulbright gave me the incredible opportunity to pursue my own unique research that brought together the various disciplines I’m interested in. I traded in my Southern California sandals for snow boots, my West Coast India Pale Ale for Weissbier, and moved to the Bavarian capital.

I went in with an open mind, ready for anything, and now a year later I have made a home here. I have a long history with Germany, having traveled here and studied at Universität Tübingen, but now my Fulbright experience has charmed me to stay in this wonderful city. I found a solid community and developed a great sense of the city and nearby nature. My German friends joke that with my persistent Fernweh, I’ve seen more of Germany than they have. Fulbright isn’t only about the world-class research that its exchanges support; its emphasis on cultural exchange and the scholar as a whole, well-rounded individual in the world deeply impacted my year and touched all aspects of my life. I left my beloved Sierra Nevada for the Alps, although I discovered that swimming at dawn in Hintersee mirrored my dives in Ediza Lake. In seemingly different cultures and landscapes across the world, there are intrinsic experiences, such as the feeling of awe when faced with mountain peaks and the sea, or a warm embrace, that weave us all together in our one Heimat and make us realize that we aren’t so different after all.

I grew up in California, exploring the wilderness of the American West, and have always been passionate about environmental conservation, especially water. Water is a basic human right and necessity that is increasingly challenged, so there should be environmentally friendly ways to ensure people have access to healthy water. To that end, my work as an environmental chemist focuses on removing toxic pollutants, known as endocrine-disrupting chemicals, from water. These chemicals come from all kinds of sources, but notably from plastics, pesticides, and medications. They are persistent in drinking water and ultimately cause diseases due to the ways they disrupt the healthy hormonal functioning of our bodies.

My research deals with bisphenol A (BPA), which is used to make polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins, but it mimics the hormone estrogen and is linked to reproductive issues, as well as a laundry list of other issues. Problem is, it’s among the most widely mass-produced chemicals worldwide and can’t be legislated away, although Europe and the U.S. are currently reexamining its toxicity. Inspired by natural plant-based enzymes that degrade these pollutants, I create simpler models for a cost-effective, “green” wastewater treatment. The manganese peroxidase enzyme mimetic that I synthesized can partially degrade and polymerize BPA in water, which is a promising first step in “green” bioremediation methods that could be used to treat drinking water and reduce the public health risks of the endocrine-disrupting chemicals ubiquitous in our everyday lives.

While I spent half my time in the lab, I spent the other half doing policy research, diving deep into the contentious issue of BPA. Just this year, the global “Water Action Decade” began, a United Nations initiative meant to support the resolutions of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which are “seventeen goals to transform our world.” Among these is Goal 6: “Clean Water and Sanitation,” which perfectly aligns with my research. My lab group at LMU Munich with Prof. Dr. Lena Daumann was an amazing team that was always smiling and made me feel at home from the start. Though mostly Germans, we also had other internationals, most of who have researched abroad. We became close friends and undertook many activities outside the lab. Working with them, I got to see how research is done outside the U.S.

Fulbright’s commission for me to pursue mutual understanding and cultural exchange didn’t stop with Germany, because in my time here I began to foster an unexpected Russian connection. Since I love languages and wanted to branch into Cyrillic, I began to learn Russian: almost immediately new doors started opening. In June, I competed at the Trilateral Science Slam in Club SO36 in Berlin, where two scientists each from the U.S. (Chelsea Nnebe and me), Germany (Daniel Angerhausen and Frieder Neunhöffer), and Russia (Kseniia Karbysheva and Nikita Mesheulov) shared their research with the general public in an entertaining, educational way. Competition aside,



Relaxing on Hintersee in Nationalpark Berchtesgaden on a research workshop with the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society; photo: Ursula Muenster



Lauren and her labmates celebrate Wiesen together in Munich; photo: Lida Holowatyj-den Toom

the intercultural aspect defined the event for me and the other slammers and I made good, lasting friendships; those tight bonds forged were the best part of the experience. The coordinators did a phenomenal job with not only the event and the coaching, but also in bringing us together and making sure that we got to know each other over the five days. Despite this effort on their end, even they were astounded by our solidarity and how high-spirited and collaborative we were! We were all fascinated by and supportive of each other’s work, despite coming from vastly different countries and disciplines. In the slam, we only cheered each other on. I am confident that an ongoing German-American-Russian intellectual and cultural exchange would benefit everyone by breaking down the barriers and encouraging more encounters like ours.

Without a doubt, the slam was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had as a scientist working on issues relevant to the environment and public health, because I shared what I do outside of my professional circles with the “real” world. When I’m running reactions in the lab and poring over data, it’s these people that I have in mind. It was also integral to my experience of the Fulbright grant, because I was at the crux of finishing and sharing my research. The complete picture was becoming more apparent after a year of hard work, and my slam was about the research that became a first-authorship on a manuscript that will soon be submitted to an international chemistry journal.

Many people congratulated me afterward on such a thought-provoking talk, and many more had a barrage of questions about how to incorporate this knowledge about endocrine disruptors and water quality into their own lives. Overall, the slam got me more excited about science communication, because I’ve always wanted to bridge the divide in understanding so that real solutions can be found. The guiding principle in my research is making my work applicable and accessible to people. I am most grateful for the opportunities I’ve had to share my research and inform people so that they can make choices to live healthier lives. The conversations I had

with people – around the research institute, in the metro and the laundromat, or in completely different countries during my travels – were both the highlight and the motif of my Fulbright year. That people are so invested in what I have to share and encourage me to keep going is the best motivation as I move forward in a transdisciplinary research career that prioritizes collaborating with scientists worldwide, and makes sure the research reaches the people whose well-being it is meant for.

My next chapter continues in Munich, where I will start my Master of Science in Sustainable Resource Management at Technische Universität München and keep on this path for clean water and a healthy environment. If you’re wondering what you can do to protect the environment and reduce your exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, here are a few of my favorite tips: 1) Minimize plastic packaging as much as possible, and preferably buy food without it. 2) Substitute plastic with glass or stainless steel. “BPA-free” doesn’t necessarily mean safe; a similar (also toxic) chemical is often used instead. 3) Do not recycle thermal paper (cash register receipts, metro tickets, etc.); it is BPA-coated. 4) Eat less canned food; cans are BPA-lined. 5) Avoid plastics #3 and #7 where possible. 5) Don’t fill the landfills, but properly recycle and dispose of waste. Better yet, consume less and create more. Lastly, advocate for evidence-based science in policy!

**Lauren Davidson** is an environmental chemist who has specialized in bioorganometallic and bioinorganic chemistry, but has “done a little of everything.” In 2016 she received her B.Sc. in Chemistry and B.A. in German Studies, with a concentration in environmental science, from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, where her emphasis on transdisciplinary problem-solving began. Lauren completed her Fulbright research grant in Munich in 2017-2018 at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. You can find her outside in mountains and water.





# Queer in the Classroom: Navigating Identity as an ETA in Hamburg

by Michaela Gill



Fulbright Prism Founders:  
Lara Steinike, Tim Sensenig, and  
Michaela Gill; photo: Tim Sensenig

Standing for the first time in front of a classroom of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students, I was ready to answer any question they threw at me. It was the beginning of my Fulbright year as an ETA in Hamburg, Germany, and my Betreuungslehrerin had just introduced me to her class. Although they seemed unsure and self-conscious of their English, the students also seemed excited to see me. A few raised their arms, pointing one finger to the ceiling. Until this moment, I had no idea that American students raised our hands differently than Germans. The first question came quickly: “Do you have a boyfriend in America?”

I froze for a moment. I did not. I did, however, have a girlfriend. Just a moment earlier I had been so ready to answer their questions. Now I felt my chest tighten and my neck and face break out in bright pink blotches. “No,” I answered, “I do not.”

I took a deep breath, trying to keep my heart rate down before my face got too red. Next question: “Why not?”

I made some quick calculations in my head; Do I want to continue down this line of questioning? Do I want to spend time researching gay slurs in German so I can listen for them as I walk through the halls and around my classrooms? Do I want to open myself to their potential criticisms, homophobia, or ignorance? “I don’t know,” I said, “Any other questions?”

Another finger pointed to the ceiling, “Why is your face so red?”

Throughout the year, I would revisit this scene hundreds of times, relieved that I had avoided potential discomfort down the line, but also full of shame and regret that I hadn’t been more brave. After all, I was in Hamburg – one of the most liberal cities in the country. I felt that I should have been more authentic; more honest. I should have come out for my own sake, but more importantly, I should have come out for the sake of my students.

I knew that by omitting the truth, I was turning away from the gay students in my classroom. I remembered how, in middle and high school, I had ached for a nice, normal, gay adult to show me that I had a future, and what that future could be. It wasn’t until college that I made a friend who was so unapologetically in love with their queerness that I couldn’t help but celebrate my own. We studied abroad in Hamburg together, and I came out to my family with their help and support while I was still abroad. Ever since then, I had wanted to be that role model for somebody else, and here I was two years later, rejecting the perfect opportunity in the same city in which I first learned to be out and proud.

Outside of the classroom, I found solace and safety and joy in my fellow grantees. We flocked to each other, with varying levels of consciousness, and created a community of our own. Together we cooked weekly dinners, during which we would talk about everything – politics, our students and coworkers, our families, and what we missed

while living abroad. Each of us expressed a desire to tap into Hamburg’s queer culture and perhaps volunteer with a local LGBTQ group. In practice, however, we found it difficult to access the experiences we so wanted. Instead, whenever we felt a need to connect with our community, we simply spent time together – just the four of us.

Three of us, Tim Sensenig, Lara Steinike, and I, decided to start *Fulbright Prism* about a year after we finished our grants. On Instagram, Tim discovered *Fulbright Noir*, which “shares the experiences of black Fulbrighters” ((a)fulbrightnoir). Immediately, we knew we wanted to create a similar community for LGBTQ-identifying Fulbright grantees and alumni. I knew that the three of us had been lucky to find each other and to have been placed in such a liberal city. Although it was small, we had a Fulbright network that could understand the unique struggles we faced as queer people living and working abroad. For most Fulbrighters, however, that network did not, and does not yet, exist.

Tim, Lara, and I want *Fulbright Prism* to be the network that queer Fulbrighters rely on before, during, and after their experience abroad. With the proper preparation, resources, and a worldwide network, we will prepare current and future grantees for successful and fulfilling experiences in the classroom, the field, or the lab.

If I could go back in time two years, I would come out to my students that first day of school. Making that choice remains difficult, especially when you are far away from

home, from your support systems, from your family, in a country that literally does not speak your language. But I still want to be that resource and that role model for young people like me, who just want proof that their future is a bright one. I hope that with *Fulbright Prism*, my friends and I can prepare thousands of future role models for full, authentic lives across the globe. I want to stand in solidarity with my LGBTQ Fulbright family, pointing our fingers to the sky, ready to change the world.

**To join or learn more about Fulbright Prism visit:**

**(a)fulbrightprism on Instagram, Fulbright Prism on Facebook (request to join closed group), or email at fulbrightprism(a)gmail.com.**

**Michaela Gill** worked as an English Teaching Assistant in Hamburg, Germany from 2016–2017, after graduating from Smith College with a B.A. in American Studies and German Studies. She is one of the founders of Fulbright Prism, which aims to connect, promote, and prepare LGBTQ Fulbright grantees for their time abroad. Michaela currently lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts.





# The Transformative Power of Cross-Cultural Exchange in Malaysia

Fulbright ETA - Malaysia - 2012

by Blake Phillips

While I could give all the credit to the U.S. Fulbright Program, the reality is a little more complicated. My enduring love for international travel and cross-cultural exchange started my freshman year at Pomona College when I spent six weeks working at an orphanage in Lima, Peru. Although I had traveled abroad on several previous occasions, this was the first time I realized how incredible it is to live abroad, fully immersed in another culture for an extended period of time.

I so thoroughly enjoyed this experience that I returned to South America my junior year to spend a semester studying abroad in Quito, Ecuador. In addition, I received an academic scholarship my senior year to conduct a six-month independent research project on microfinance in the Peruvian Andes.

After graduating from Pomona College with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics, I applied to the U.S. Fulbright Program to continue my research on microfinance in the Peruvian Andes. However, my application was rejected and instead I took a job as a Senior Research Analyst at Compass Lexecon, an antitrust economics consulting firm. As much as I loved living in San Francisco, CA and the excitement of working on multi-billion dollar antitrust cases, I could tell that something was missing from my life.

As a result, I applied to the U.S. Fulbright Program in Malaysia to learn more about a different part of the world. To my surprise, I received the fellowship and quickly found myself on a plane to Kuala Lumpur with a small group of fellow Americans who similarly had no idea what they had signed up for on the other side of the Pacific.

As a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant, I spent a year teaching English to 400 students at a rural secondary school in Malaysia. The community I lived in consisted of a couple small shops, houses, a school, a mosque, and a gas station along the side of the road surrounded by hundreds of miles of palm oil plantations.

I spent the year developing meaningful friendships with my students, fellow teachers, and the community. During school hours, I taught English to groups of 30+ students ranging from 11 to 18 years old. After school, I played soccer with my students and discussed the merits of U.S. foreign policy with my neighbors over coffee at the local café. In addition, I worked with my fellow Fulbright English Teaching Assistants to create an English Debate Club and organize five overnight English camps for more than 1,500 students around the country. In turn, I felt the same warmth, kindness, and generosity from the Malaysian people that I felt while living in South America.



Class photo with my principal, fellow teachers, and 5 D class.

The year I spent in Malaysia was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It taught me the immense power of public diplomacy and cross-cultural exchange to change the world for the better. Moreover, I started to notice the similarities that make us human. While we eat different food, wear different clothes, sing different songs, and pray to different gods, we are all searching for a sense of meaning in our lives and a sense of community wherever we live. We all want to be loved and respected for who we are. We all want to create a better life for ourselves, our families, our communities, and our children.

After finishing my Fulbright in Malaysia, I returned to my original area of policy expertise – economics – by taking a job as the Senior Research Assistant to the Director of Monetary Affairs at the Federal Reserve Board of Governors in Washington, D.C. In this position, I conducted research, prepared briefings, and wrote policy memoranda for the Federal Open Market Committee regarding the interaction between U.S. monetary policy and global financial markets.

I enjoyed learning about the finer mechanics of the U.S. monetary policy and the global financial system. In addition,

I felt incredibly lucky to sit in on meetings in which important people – much smarter and more experienced than myself – determined the fate of the global economy. However, while I had plenty of opportunities to continue in this field by enrolling in an Economics Ph.D. program, I always knew this wasn't the right path for me.

Rather, I collected my courage and decided to leave my job at the Federal Reserve to search for the missing piece of the puzzle. Around the same time, I decided to join the Board of Directors of the Fulbright Association National Capital Area Chapter in Washington, D.C.

As the Director of Advocacy for the Fulbright Association National Capital Area Chapter, I spearhead the chapter's advocacy efforts on behalf of the U.S. Fulbright Program. For example, we help the Fulbright Association organize an ongoing series of Fulbright Advocacy Day events, during which hundreds of Fulbright alumni from around the country meet with their respective members of Congress to highlight the positive, global impact of the U.S. Fulbright Program.

In addition, I created the *Fulbright NCAC International Relations Discussion Group*, a highly-successful event series that brings together Fulbright alumni from 165+ countries around the world to discuss issues of domestic and international importance.

The goal of this event series is to create a fun, social environment in which participants feel comfortable engaging each other in open and honest debate regarding the most pressing domestic and international policy issues of the day. In turn, participants come away from these discussion group sessions with a better understanding of their own beliefs – as well as a greater appreciation for the wide diversity of opinions held by other Fulbrighters on a particular set of policy issues.



Eating lunch in the school canteen with my fellow teachers.



Teaching my 2 D class.



Hanging out after school with several students from my 5 M class.





Blake with fellow Fulbrighters at the Fulbright 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala at the US State Department.

This event series encapsulates the essence of the U.S. Fulbright Program as it fosters greater respect and mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and the rest of the world by creating opportunities for open and honest dialogue across social, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious, and political divides.

At the same time, I realized the same underlying principles that make the U.S. Fulbright Program such a powerful force for peace and mutual understanding in 165+ countries around the world could be utilized to help bridge our social, cultural, and political divisions at home as well.

Thus, following the partisan rancor of the 2016 presidential election, I joined Better Angels, a rapidly-growing citizens' movement focused on addressing the issue of political polarization in the United States. As the regional coordinator for Better Angels in Washington, D.C., I organize a series of *Red-Blue Workshops* that utilize the same underlying principles of public diplomacy and cross-cultural exchange I learned as a U.S. Fulbright Scholar in Malaysia to help bridge the political divide in our nation's capital.



Teaching my 5 M class.



Fulbright ETA English Camp with a couple students from my 4 D class.



A couple 5 D students made this sign after I left.

Looking back on the course of my professional career, I am reminded of something my grandmother once told me – that a person's life only makes sense when looking in the rearview mirror. As such, I remain hopeful that I will eventually figure out how to weave together all of these seemingly disparate threads of my life into a single, coherent narrative.

In the meantime, I remain confident that the skills I learned and experiences I had as a U.S. Fulbright Scholar in Malaysia will continue to play an important role in the development of my professional career over the coming years. As a result, I remain eternally grateful for this incredible opportunity, as well as for the heartfelt welcome of the Malaysian people which made my experience so thoroughly enriching once I stepped off that airplane in Kuala Lumpur.

**Blake Phillips** spent a year teaching English to 400 students at a rural secondary school as a U.S. Fulbright Scholar in Malaysia. He is now the Director of Advocacy for the Fulbright Association National Capital Area Chapter in Washington, D.C., where he spearheads their advocacy efforts on behalf of the U.S. Fulbright Program on Capitol Hill.



# New Members

Welcome to the Fulbright Alumni e.V.! As a member, you become part of a unique network of change-makers.

Participate in our national and regional activities, meet inspiring people, and contribute new ideas!

Maximilian Springer	Wiesbaden	Anna Irvine	München
Jan Frühwald	St. Ingbert	Dennis Bachmann	Berlin
Marianne Fehn	Frankfurt	Thomas Bodner	Berlin
Malte Matzen	Langenhorn	Alexander Wechsler	Ansbach
Janani Ravi	Bochum	Julia Aronova	München
Jana Frey	Langen/Geestland	Alexandra Drexler	Berlin
Cornelius Adebahr	Berlin	Matthias Karow	Berlin
Elena Hees	Monsheim	Barbara Steinbauer-Grötsch	Hersbruck
Susanne Quitmann	München	Stephanie Beyer	Bamberg
Jannis Schliesing	Göttingen	Marius Wiggert	Esslingen
Chantal Häbig	Rheinfelden	Michael Kölbl	Neuburg/Inn
Ludwig Jung	Marktgraitz	Vincent Stepputat	Freiberg
Birgit Herbeck	Sprockhövel	Miriam Freier	Heidelberg
Christian B. Döring	Darmstadt	Sönke Vogel	Aachen
Marcel Neitzel	Berlin	Tobias Zowada	Walldorf
Eberhard Scheiffele Dr.	Wangen	Marina Heimböck	Nördlingen
Sören Petrat Prof.	Bremen	Silas Schütz	Saarbrücken
Sebastian Dern	Berlin	Maximilian Ringleb	Berlin

# Remembered

By chance, we realized shortly after the General Assembly in 2016 that one of our members had passed away a few years ago. To communicate sad information more steadily,

we established this permanent column for remembering Fulbright Alumni and their lives. We hope that we will not have to print an entry in every future FRANKly issue.

## Celebrating the Lives of Alumni and Friends

Lutz Grossmann	16. November 2017
Jakob Braun	29. January 2018
Johannes (John) Hensel	30. June 2018





# The Fellowship of Königstein

by René Bernard

Hike with beautiful vistas

Nowadays connectedness is as easy as a click of a button. However, experiences in nature as a group of friends is much more meaningful than what shared pictures on social media walls can tell. When like-minded people from different backgrounds come together to share their stories and make memories in nature together, a unique personal bond is formed.

Just like every year since 2001, Elke and Falk, founders of the Fulbright Family Weekend, have publically reached out to Fulbright alumni and their families with an invitation to join them for an extended weekend around Ascension Day to explore the magnificent nature and landscape of Saxon Switzerland. For our family, this year was the fifth consecutive time that we joined the group of more than 30 to spend three days together at the Familienoase Königstein. Located across the river from the city of Königstein, our family friendly and easy going accommodation there contributes to the spirit during the family weekend. Unlike in hotels, there are no TVs or phones in the rooms, the WiFi is restricted to one small area in the common room, and cell phones have no reception in the deep Elbe valley. The hosts have something to offer that is rarely found these days: hospitality. Upon arrival at the Oase, one can already feel the excitement at the sight of familiar faces, the curiosity to see children who have grown so much over the past year, and the openness to make friends with the people who are joining for the first time. Many ambitious guests use the arrival day for the first hike to the nearby Lilienstein. But for our family we usually take arrival day slowly, knowing that

other great hikes await us in the upcoming days. However, the big round table on the first evening with personal introductions combined with the announcement of the Friday hike is a ritual that definitely can't be missed. This year we were particularly lucky since the forecast predicted perfect hiking weather for the weekend.

Our first group hike led us to Bad Schandau via ferry and train. From there we walked along the romantic Malerweg to first climb the Papstein and then the Gorisch, where we rested. The view from these 450m peaks is breath taking. The contrast of rough sand stone mountains with the green forest and the yellow rapeseed fields is so picturesque that a picture cannot do it justice. In the warm and sunny afternoon hours we decided to go back down the valley to head back to Königstein where we all enjoyed a well-earned ice cream together.

On Saturday we had a special program. The tour starting point was down the river in Wehlen, where we first hiked alongside a small dried-out riverbed which had been previously enforced with cobblestones. Vegetation has now started to grow where once only water intermittently flowed down towards the Elbe River. Next, we entered the Höllengrund and experienced first-hand the large steep mountains on both sides of the path, which probably gave the place its name. After entering a few more gorges we reached our destination: Rathen's Natural Open Air Stage. This famous theater near the Wehlengrund Valley has served as theatrical scenery for more than 80 years. We all

enjoyed the premiere of a play based on the Brothers Grimm folktale, "The Story of a Boy Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was." When it finished we even had some power left-over to hike up the river toward our home base, the Oase, while the others went back by ferry and train. Both groups reached the Oase around the same time. That night we sat, drank, and talked together until late in the evening. Enjoying each other's company was again the hallmark of this wonderful week, which was only missing one major player: Uwe, who could not attend this year due to a professional commitment. Luckily, at least his family was able to join us for the Friday hike. However, we still missed Uwe's humor, guidance, and spirit, which always help to bring the group closer together. To let him know how connected we felt to him, we sent him not an electronic message, but a Saxon Switzerland card, which we all signed. Because as a fellow of Königstein you never hike alone.



Spring at its best in Rathen



Happy kids

**René Bernard** is a pharmacist and neuroscientist by training. Currently working at the Charité in Berlin, his research includes preclinical stroke modeling and the development of systems to improve biomedical research quality. His Fulbright Scholarship brought him the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1999/2001) where he earned his PhD and found the love of life, Stephanie. In 2007 they relocated to Berlin. They are proud parents of two boys.



Plenty of photo opps

All photos by Elke Handschug-Brosin



# Regional Chapter Cologne-Bonn



## Get Connected

by Ulrich Götz

On May 18<sup>th</sup> 2017, Ingo Zamperoni presented his new book, "Fremdes Land Amerika," in Cologne. The event was organized by the Amerikahaus NRW e.V. and opening remarks were held by Benjamin Becker, CEO of the Amerikahaus. He then handed the microphone over to David Patrician, who moderated throughout the event. In addition to talking about the book, they also chatted about their mixed marriages. The German, Ingo, is married to an American woman, while the American, David, has a German wife: a true transatlantic connection! A rather remarkable coincidence about this event is the fact that all of the coordinators – Benjamin, Ingo and David – are Fulbright Alumni, although the Fulbright Association was not involved in organizing this special occasion. We were able to gather eleven Alumni at this event and thus made it our own.

Another connection of the regional chapter Cologne-Bonn is the friendship with the Deutsch-Amerikanische Gesellschaft and Freundeskreis Köln-Indianapolis. While the joint Thanksgiving Dinner is already an established



tradition, we now have a Stammtisch compiled of four U.S. related associations in Cologne. Additionally, at the invitation of the Freundeskreis and Amerikahaus, we also got to enjoy the Jazz concert, which was held in the former Pfandhaus. The concert was not only incredibly enjoyable: it also highlighted the strong relationship between Indianapolis and Cologne, as the band is formed by members from both sides of the Atlantic.

While the Thanksgiving Dinner is organized in a restaurant, our traditional 4<sup>th</sup>-of-July party is organized on a private basis as a potluck dinner, meaning last year, the Stars-and-Stripes could be raised in our house! Although no fireworks were lit, the good weather made up for this and a very cheerful crowd enjoyed steaks and German Würstchen together.

If you would like to get connected with the Cologne-Bonn Regional Chapter, please contact Isabel, Viola or me.



# Regional Chapter Mannheim-Heidelberg

## Say Hi, If You're Nearby

by Benjamin Pfleger

Located in one of Germany's finest regions, the regional chapter Mannheim-Heidelberg encompasses everything between the Palatinate Forest in the west, the "Odenwald" in the east, and all the way to Karlsruhe in the south.

The chapter's boundaries boast two internationally renowned, top-ranked universities. Every year, several students from abroad choose to study in Mannheim-Heidelberg on Fulbright scholarships. As a result, the chapter has the pleasure to frequently welcome Americans to the "Stammtisch", and often bids a joyful farewell to German students from the region who are headed to the US.



Lecker!

Last year, we celebrated Thanksgiving again in a beautiful restaurant that used to be a church. The unique setting added a special touch to this very authentic US-American holiday. We also had the pleasure of welcoming participants of the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (CBYX) for Thanksgiving and enjoyed an opulent dinner with a delicious turkey, stuffing, and cranberry sauce.

The regional chapter is pleased to invite everyone to say hi, join in on one of the regularly held Stammtisch, or participate in any of the various other activities. For more information, please send an email to [rc.mannheim-heidelberg\(a\)fulbright-alumni.de](mailto:rc.mannheim-heidelberg(a)fulbright-alumni.de) or visit the calendar on [fulbright-alumni.de](http://fulbright-alumni.de).



All photos by Benjamin Pfleger



# Regional Chapter Frankfurt

## In the heart of Europe

by Maximilian Zahn

The Frankfurt regional chapter is a large and very enthusiastic chapter due to its diverse mixture of both new and long-time committed members, ranging from their early 20s to late 50s. The main activity is the “Stammtisch” – the first Thursday of the month, regardless if this falls on a normal Thursday or a holiday. We try to choose various locations covering international and local cuisine from African to Frankfurt Äbbelwoi restaurants, and we are always open to new suggestions!

At the Stammtisch we discuss the latest local and global news as well as personal issues, and of course, the next fun things our chapter could do: outdoor events such as hiking or biking, trips to the cinema, museum tours, and many

Hiking tour to the Königstein Castle ruins;  
photo: Reinhard Koch



Have a break, have a Cup of ice cream ...



... or a glass of Crémant in Isabelle's and Oliver's garden;  
photos: Reinhard Koch

more cultural activities. A few core traditions have been set in stone over the past ten years. For example, every summer Mario Reichel (the former head of the chapter) and his wife, Evi, invite the Fullies to their house for a BBQ on their terrace. Additionally, every November we come together to celebrate the famous Thanksgiving Turkey Dinner at the Arche Nova restaurant, complete with an entire turkey on the table! Around 50 youngsters and other young-at-hearts from Frankfurt and the surrounding area, Americans and partners from the PPP (Parlamentarische Patenschafts-programm), come together and celebrate this great event. Our December gathering is preceded by a stroll to the large Christmas Market at the Römer, where a few very bold members even ride the merry-go-round sometimes! Another highlight for the usual crowd is the yearly General Assembly and Winter Ball.

For many, many years we have celebrated the Fourth of July at the house of Christa and Knut Mittwollen in Offenbach. For those sportive enough, the afternoon starts with a bike tour and in the evening we gather for a BBQ and interesting discussions in a relaxing atmosphere. Many thanks to Christa and Knut for their hospitality every year!

At the invitation of the American Consulate, we also had the opportunity to take part in the CSD festivities in the area this year, beginning with breakfast at the Consulate. It was important for us to show support for this celebration in Frankfurt and we were honored to be a part of it. Additionally, in July several members attended a special event at the consulate honoring the Berlin airlift.

The mural unveiling in commemoration  
of the Berlin Airlift; photo: Patrick Seiler



# Regional Chapter Düsseldorf

by Michael Vetter

Since the chapter Düsseldorf/Rhein-Ruhr covers a large area, it can be difficult to bring our members together for joint activities. Our decision to do our Stammtisch in different cities – we meet in Düsseldorf, Bochum, and Essen – has worked out quite well and enables members to join our meetings and have a nice chat among Fulbright fellows without having to travel too far.

In 2017, we chose a new option for celebrating the 4<sup>th</sup> of July: we spent a wonderful and sunny day at Kemnader See for an extensive BBQ and games. Additionally, in December we made it to the Christmas market in Düsseldorf to celebrate the upcoming holiday season!

In order to strengthen our exchange with the US-American community in Düsseldorf, we met the Vice-Consul of the General Consulate of Düsseldorf, Benjamin Chapman, for a working lunch to discuss the best ways to exchange ideas and work together regarding events. We plan to establish a regular exchange of ideas with the General Consulate in Düsseldorf in the future and are eager to connect with the current Fulbrighters visiting from the US!

The Frankfurt Chapter reflects back on quite an eventful year with a group of very engaged members. Whether an invitation from the American Consulate to an exciting event or just one of our monthly Stammtisch meetings at our favorite restaurant, you can be sure that there is always something in the works within the Frankfurt Chapter.

We invite both current Fulbrighters, alumni, and future Fulbrighters to join our events and be a part of our great regional chapter!

Wine tasting at Cem's Atelier; photo: Aline Klingberg





# Regional Chapter Munich

## Five Seasons

by Maren Stein

Munich has five seasons: spring, summer, autumn, winter – and the Oktoberfest.

We bounced into spring with a visit to Airhop, a large trampoline park. The activity brought back happy childhood memories of bouncy castles but also proved to be a surprisingly strenuous exercise. We also engaged in a favorite American pastime, bowling. Half a dozen alumni of the Parliamentary Partnership Program (PPP) joined us for a friendly competition on three lanes at Dreambowl Palace. Additionally, this March, for the first time, a former American grantee was elected to the board of the regional chapter. So we are an international team now.



Baywatch, German style;  
photo: Andreas Schoberth



Hold on tight!;  
photo: Andreas Schoberth



Bouncing at Airhop;  
photo: Andreas Schoberth

Petrus, the saint commonly made responsible for the weather, mostly smiled upon us this past summer, so we were able to meet for several of our Stammtische in beer gardens and even visited an open-air performance of Hamlet in English. Only for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July party was the weather less than ideal, but we did not let that deter us from firing up the barbecue. In September, we took advantage of one of the last 'summery' days to go wakeboarding: the combination of water skiing and snowboarding looks much easier than it is... luckily, all of us could swim!

In late October we had the busiest Stammtisch in recent memory with over 25 participants, many of them current American grantees. Less than five minutes after the first person arrived, there was no space left at the table we had booked. Luckily the restaurant was quite empty, so we made it work. November saw our Thanksgiving turkey dinner, which is a time-honored tradition that we have been celebrating in the same restaurant for more than ten years. A group of PPP alumni joined us for the delicious feast.

In December, we met for our annual Secret Santa Stammtisch, to which everyone brings a small, wrapped present. Once all presents have been piled on the table, everyone in turn may either choose an unclaimed present or steal a present someone else has claimed. This continues until all presents have been allocated. In February, we took the

spectacular new cabin lift up the Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain, for a day of skiing.

Instead of the regular Oktoberfest we visited the "Oide Wiesn", which lets visitors travel back to a time before the Wiesn became an international tourist attraction. The "Oide Wiesn" offers not only historic fairground rides, but also beer brewed based on a recipe from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Several of us seized the occasion to sport our Dirndl or Lederhosen.



Munich Stammtisch, XXL size;  
photo: Andreas Schoberth

Throughout the year we had a varied cultural program. One of the highlights was an exhibition of a collection of books chosen for their different characteristic smells. The visitors were invited to touch and smell the books, one of which was more than 200 years old, with closed eyes. Another highlight was MAYA, a techno-opera with augmented reality features, performed in an abandoned power station. We also attended a stand-up comedy performance and visited an exhibition of garments inspired by the fashions of ancient Greece, designed by students of the Munich Academy of Fashion and Design. Last but not least, our movie group regularly goes to the movie theater to watch films in the English original.

Greetings from the Munich Regional Chapter!

Regional Chapter Board: Maren Stein, Andrea Freiberger, Danielle Cravens, and Andreas Schoberth

View from the Top of Germany;  
photo: Andreas Schoberth



Warm-up before the ride;  
photo: Andreas Schoberth



Duftbücher;  
photo: unknown



Smiling in reality;  
photo: Andreas Schoberth



# Regional Chapter Hamburg

## Moin aus Hamburg...

by David Patrician

... what a year it has been for our chapter. We have enjoyed a variety of stammtisches around the city, continued meeting up with our Parlamentarische Patenschafts-Program (PPP) friends and also hosted the 2018 Fulbright Alumni Winterball!

This year we invited some high school students from ACCESS (English scholarship program) to join us for our annual Thanksgiving Bowling night. We had many interesting discussions ranging from music trends to the current status of the transatlantic relationship and ways to combat the rise of populism on both sides of the Atlantic. It was a great night and we are already planning for our next bowling adventure.



Fulbrighters at the US Consulate



Hamburg Fulbrighters at the Winterball;  
photo: Kay Dethlefs

In December, a few of our members attended the annual Christmas Party at the US Consulate on the Alster. Over 400 guests were there for the lighting of the Christmas tree, complete with live music, food, and drinks. In addition, a few of us visited the local Weihnachtsmärkte (Christmas Markets) and enjoyed a Glühwein (or two ☺).

On the weekend of Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> our chapter hosted the annual Fulbright Alumni Winterball. It was a special weekend with over 200 Fulbrighters from all over Germany (and a few other countries) in attendance. The highlight was a dinner gala at the famed Hotel Atlantic with delicious food, a great DJ and a few Fulbrighters even meeting the legendary German rocker, Mr. Udo Lindenberg. A BIG thank you to our Winterball Organizing team...we did it!

Finally, this summer we had two highlights: the first was that a group of Fulbrighters were invited to a private tour of the USS Mount Whitney (the ship was in Kiel for a few days to participate in the Kieler Woche), and the second highlight was that Fulbright Alum, Manfred Strack (former director of the Hamburg Amerikazentrum), was awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz – the highest award a civilian in Germany can receive. Manfred has volunteered thousands of hours to the Amerikazentrum helping promote the German-American friendship over several decades. We are very proud that a Hamburg Fulbrighter won this prestigious award!



Fulbrighters from the Hamburg Chapter on the USS Mount Whitney  
during the Kieler Woche 2018; photo: Catriona Leckie



Fulbright Bowling Night;  
photo: Alex Swanson

# Regional Chapter Franken

## Independence BBQ with Fulbrighters and Friends in Erlangen

by Desiree Doyle

It has become a tradition of the Franconian Chapter that we meet at Dési's apartment every year (head of the Franken Regional Chapter) for a nice Fourth of July BBQ on her balcony. This year we were lucky with the weather; the sun shined all day!

We started the celebration on July 8<sup>th</sup> at 4pm with some starters and iced tea while Dési prepared the grill: Franconian sausages, lamb chops, noodle salad and some garlic bread were waiting for us. As always, the Fourth of July party was a potluck, and all Fulbrighters were encouraged to contribute a dish of their own. We even had nonalcoholic beer for those who had to drive and – as a specialty – white wine from New Zealand. For dessert we had brownies and cupcakes, which we paired with coffee and pear brandy. Everything was very tasty!

During the party we had a vivid discussion about organizing a regular Stammtisch in Würzburg, which we hope to implement in the upcoming months.

Our Thanksgiving Dinner will be the next major event, and we are looking forward to seeing old friends and meeting new Fulbrighters. To stay informed, just check out the Fulbright calendar online!



This year's recipient of the Jürgen Mulert Memorial Award on Mutual Understanding is Bridget Kinneary for her work with

# Mit Mach Musik e.V.

Mit Mach Musik e.V. was founded in April 2016. The goal of the program: to use music as a means of integration for refugee children and teenagers in the Berlin area by providing them with high-quality, cost-free music instruction. The project offers general music for young children, recorder, standard orchestral instruments, and classical guitar. The urgent circumstances of the migration crisis left little time for planning and philosophizing before a violinist and a cellist simply walked into two shelters and gathered a group of children, starting the practical work immediately. Since then, the program has grown and evolved. It now boasts six locations throughout Berlin (Potsdam, Friedenau, Zehlendorf, Spandau, Marzahn/Hellersdorf, Neukölln), operating in a combination of refugee shelters and neutral venues. Additionally, a new education structure/concept with four different, skill-based, levels of instruction was implemented in spring 2018 in order to better serve the diverse needs of the students. I joined the teaching team in fall of 2016 just three weeks after arriving for my Fulbright year and finding a postcard advertising the project spontaneously. With the restructuring in early 2018, I was appointed as one of two music directors for the project.

The mission of this project is noble and agreeable, however, I will be the first to admit that the work has felt hopeless at times. Especially when I first started, I could not get my mind off of the lack of basic human needs such as stable living conditions, sufficient food, and the proximity of

family these children are faced with. They arrived in Berlin uprooted in body and soul. The question, "What can music do," ran through my mind for days, weeks, and months on end. After being a firsthand witness to the growth of my students over the past year and a half, I can testify to what I always sensed to be true: that music is a vital element of human healing and wholeness.

In spring 2017, we took a group of students to a concert at the Berliner Philharmonie Kammernusiksaal. It was a long program of classical music, and as it often is when I take student groups to concerts, I was happily surprised at how quiet and attentive they were. What surprised me a bit more was to see the twelve year old student next me begin to cry at the end of one of the pieces. She turned to me and whispered, "Sometimes when I think about the past, I cannot help it." Music is expression, and engaging with it through playing and listening creates space in our minds to think, to feel, and to release. As a matter of principle in **Mit Mach Musik**, the teachers have made a point not to probe too much about the children's pasts. Seldom in my life have I felt that I was actually reaching or helping someone as much as I did sitting next to my student during the concert as she cried.

Learning to play a musical instrument is one of those precious things in life that cannot be approached with haste. Amongst the tragic patchwork of stop gap solutions that make up a refugee's livelihood, learning a musical instrument sets up a long-term framework in their brain, where they can think about and witness progress that is slow moving, yet profound. Learning music is learning persistence, and it is our hope that by engaging with the persistence required to learn an instrument they can, if nothing else, take this to other parts of their lives and begin to understand the value and importance of long-term thinking.



Even though "The I word" (read: integration) is front and center in our mission statement, I avoid using it at all costs and prefer to let music itself do the work. Last year, we organized a day when our children from **Mit Mach Musik** joined the students at a local Berlin school in the orchestra class. The first point of contact between these students was the recognition of the instruments in the hands of the others, a commonality. I believe this to be integration in the most organic form because instead of starting by acknowledging differences, asking where the others are from, or something of the sort, this day offered the students new experiences of creation, which served as the foundation for them to further get to know one another, perhaps even discussing their differences. Music is collaboration where one gets to share one of the deepest moving, carefully developed, and expressive parts of the psyche.

Due to the reasons stated above and many more, I have ceased questioning the value of what we do at **Mit Mach Musik**: I'm absolutely convinced of it. What we are giving these kids is a chance and a means to align themselves internally and connect with others as they face the demons of their past and the demands of the chaotic world they have landed in. That is not to say that the stress or hardships that I personally experience on a daily basis from working with these children and their families has subsided: I've come to accept tension and stress as an important part of standing at the intersection of cultures and trying to figure out, together with my colleagues, how to communicate our passions and offer help to the underserved. What I've realized is that facing the uncomfortable and unknown is the only hope for humanity as it takes slow steps towards social justice. In the words of Steven Pinker, "We will never have a better world, but it is not romantic or naive to fight for a better one."



**Bridget Kinneary** is the co-music director of the Mit Mach Musik Project. Before moving to Berlin in 2016 as a Fulbright ETA, she studied viola performance and music education at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

## Mulert Award 2019 – Call for Nominations

Since 2010, the German Fulbright Alumni Association grants the „Jürgen Mulert Award on Mutual Understanding“, in memory of the association's initiator and founder, Dr. Jürgen Mulert (1938-2008). The Mulert Award is bestowed annually to researchers, artists, professionals, and volunteers across disciplines whose work reflects and advances discourse and peace through mutual understanding.

It is our pleasure to invite friends and members of the Fulbright family worldwide to submit online nominations for candidates for the 2019 Mulert Award. Nominees must be former participants of one of the many Fulbright programs. Nominated projects may be professional or volunteer, and may have an artistic, social or economic character.

### The prize package for the Mulert Award winner includes the following:

- recognition during the award ceremony at the Association's annual Winterball in January/February 2019, in Düsseldorf
- project summary and author biography in the 2019 issue of the FRANKly magazine as well as on the Association's website
- 500 EUR monetary support for the awarded project
- Networking opportunities within the Fulbright Alumni community
- full travel support

The Call for Nominations will be accessible online until **November 30, 2018**.

For further information, please refer to [www.fulbright-alumni.de](http://www.fulbright-alumni.de)

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