

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair hugging a man from behind. The woman is smiling broadly with her eyes closed, showing her teeth. She is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and has several colorful beaded bracelets on her right wrist. The man is wearing a grey sweater. The background is blurred.

# Electric Engagement

# Frankly

The Fulbright Alumni e.V. Magazine



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# Letter from the Editor



Dear Readers,

Whether receiving this in the mail, flipping through the pages at the Welcome Meeting in Darmstadt, or browsing online, I want to thank you for your continued support of the FRANKly. This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> edition of the magazine: from its inception in 1987 until today, the FRANKly has served as an informative, engaging resource for current grantees and alumni, helping them learn more about the events, meetings, and conferences that have occurred over the past year, while also providing a glimpse into the adventures their fellow Fulbrighters have been embarking on.

This year's theme, "Electric Engagement," centers on the electrifying factors in our contributors' lives – how they are fueled by positive energy or how they combat negative charges that cross their paths – and the ways in which they electrically engage with their communities, in projects, or through their work. At Fulbright events where current grantees, alumni, and friends are eager to network, share their ideas, and to learn from one another, the electricity in the room is palpable: our goal was to bring this energy to the pages of the FRANKly.

When you find something you're passionate about, something that engrosses you wholeheartedly – such as engaging enthusiastically with your students everyday

like Samantha Shipeck (Middle School Magic, page 16) or by creating an award-winning product with your startup-team like Ellery Studio (Infographics for Action, page 10), – you want to hold onto that spark and nurture the flame: by browsing through the FRANKly, the reader is presented with snapshots of Fulbrighters who are doing just that.

I am excited to present the 30<sup>th</sup> issue to the Fulbright grantees and alumni. I hope this edition serves as inspiration while simultaneously highlighting how diverse, motivating, and brilliant the Fulbright community truly is. I would like to thank Astrid Weingarten, our graphic designer, for her exceptional work and assistance in creating this issue, as well as our proofreaders Andreas Schoberth and Sarah Martin for their efforts. Last but definitely not least, a very big thank you to all of the contributors who shared their writing and stories with us.

Happy Reading!

*Anna Irvine*  
Anna Irvine

**SHARING  
is CARING**

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share your idea,  
share your knowledge,  
share it here!

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★ **We have a new website!** Connect with us online at [fulbright-alumni.de](http://fulbright-alumni.de) ★

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# Greetings from the President



Dear Fulbrighters and Friends,

It is my pleasure to introduce our 2019 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.

Last year, our focus was on Solidarity and on what we can achieve when we work together. With this in mind, the alumni board worked closely with the German Fulbright Commission to strengthen the teamwork within the German Fulbright family. To create a more solid foundation for the collaboration, we drafted an agreement on future cooperation. For their initiative and help in this regard, I want to thank Daniel H. Wagner and his colleagues from the German Fulbright Commission.

Additionally, together with the alumni from the Congress-Bundestag Exchange Program, Lisa Schmitz and Allie Drexler organized a strategy workshop for the European Network of American Alumni Associations (ENAM), to discuss opportunities for a closer collaborative partnership with these organizations throughout Europe.

The theme of the new edition of the FRANKly is "Electric Engagement," supported by the question, "What electrifies you?" At events during the past year, we asked Fulbrighters two things: what types of engagement have such an effect on them that it deserves to be called "electrifying," and how can we harness this energy into the efforts of the Alumni Association? The answers to the topics that Fulbrighters are passionate about were just as diverse as the Fulbright community, ranging from arts and sciences to social and community work. The responses on how we can implement this engagement into the Association were surprisingly similar: bring like-minded people together and see what they can achieve. To this end, we created the concept of thematic working groups within the association.

The idea for thematic groups came from the Diversity Alumni, who were already working on diversity related topics together with the Fulbright Commission. Now, just a few months later, Fulbrighters are establishing groups for various topics of interest, such as environmental protection or supporting German-US youth exchange programs. For me, this shows not only the strength of the Fulbright spirit but also the potential of our community.

I hope you enjoy reading our 30th issue of the FRANKly, and, if while reading, you think about a topic that electrifies you and which you want to engage with in cooperation with the FAeV, please let us know!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Florian Grigoleit". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "F" and a long, horizontal stroke at the end.

Yours truly,  
Florian Grigoleit



Sarah Martin



Johannes Schulz



Florian Grigoleit



Andreas Dewald



Fabienne Rudolph

# Meet the Board

## Sarah Martin

### Vice President Communications

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 wrapping up her M.A. thesis about Writing Center pedagogy at the Ludwig Maximilians University Munich. Sarah has thus far enjoyed her time in Munich, and hopes to stay in the area to start a career. Her hobbies include singing with MiCapella with a fellow Fulbright alum, baking, and attending Fulbright events! Her favorites are the Munich Stammtisch and the Welcome Meeting, and hopes to see many of you at these and other future events.

## Johannes Schulz

### Vice President Finances

Following short stints in Latvia and China, Johannes spent his Fulbright year at the University of Iowa and received his Master of Laws in 2009. He then returned to Germany and started working in the commodities trading business, and currently works as a senior regulatory advisor at one of Germany's largest energy firms. In early 2012, Johannes spent time in the Philippines working for a local non-profit organization and his volunteering and traveling has yet to slow down! He was the coordinator for the Rhein-Ruhr Fulbright Regional Chapter for three years and also organized the Welcome Meeting in Düsseldorf in 2013. Johannes recently spent time living and working in England, and after his return to Düsseldorf in 2018 he became active in the FAeV at the first opportunity by joining the organizational team for the 2019 Winter Ball. As Vice President of Finances he wants to help foster the interest of the many FAeV members who have not recently been active in the association.

# The Board

## Florian Grigoleit

### President

Florian Grigoleit is a Ph.D. student at the Technische Universität München and founder of inSafe.ai. In both his research and his work he focuses on applying artificial intelligence in engineering. He spent his Fulbright year (2010-11) in Pullman, WA, where he studied Computer Engineering and fell in love with the Pacific Northwest. Due to his great experiences at Alumni Events, he joined the board of the Alumni Association in 2015 as treasurer and was then elected as president in 2018. As president, he works on strengthening the cooperation with other Alumni associations and the Fulbright Commission.

## Andreas Dewald

### Vice President Members

Prior to going to the US on a Fulbright scholarship, Andreas graduated with a bachelor's degree in Engineering Management from Hochschule Darmstadt. At Purdue University in Indiana he pursued a master's degree in Technology, Leadership and Innovation: he received his degree at the end of 2018. His passion for Fulbright led him to participate in the Fulbright Conference twice, as well as lead the Purdue Fulbright Association for one semester. After his return to Germany, Andreas joined the Fulbright board as Vice President of Members. He wants to engage all members in the newly-formed workgroups and help integrate returning Fulbrighters into the association. Andreas is currently writing his master's thesis about the stationary use of fuel cell technology at Daimler AG and in Engineering Management. Andreas is passionate about technology, future mobility, intercultural exchange, and connecting people.

## Fabienne Rudolph

### Vice President Events

Fabienne spent her Fulbright year (2013-14) in Boston, Massachusetts graduating with a M.Sc. in Music Industry Leadership from Northeastern University. Upon returning to Germany, she started working in the German music industry and is currently working as a Licensing Manager at Concord ([www.concord.com](http://www.concord.com)). Fabienne, or „Fabs“ as she is known to her friends both in and outside the association, joined the board in 2016 first as the Outreach Chair before being elected Vice President of Events in 2017. As Vice President of Events her focus is on organizing the annual Welcome Meeting as well as finding regional chapters willing to host our national events.

# 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 on a Fulbright Scholarship to work as an English Teaching Assistant in Rheinfelden, Baden-Württemberg. 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. She is currently completing her Master's degree at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, while also working part-time at the Steelcase Learning + Innovation Center. This is her second year in charge of the FRANKly.

## Kateryna Mishina

### Diversity Initiative Co-Chair

Kateryna Mishina is currently a Medical Student at the HHU Düsseldorf and works as a Consultant Analyst at the Kerkhoff Group. She received her Fulbright Scholarship in 2014, completing the one-month Diversity Initiative Program at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where her interest in international work was sparked. After her Fulbright exchange, she studied Business at the WHU Otto Beisheim School of Management and Public Speaking at the GSA Steinbeiß Hochschule Berlin. During the course of her studies, she completed internships in Shanghai and Cambridge, as well as a semester abroad in Canada at the Asper School of Business. As a returnee, Kateryna became part of the Fulbright Alumni e.V. and enjoys taking part in various Fulbright events. She has served on the extended board since 2018, working together with Dunja Nofal on diversity related topics.



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

## Dunja Nofal

### Diversity Initiative Co-Chair

Dunja Nofal is currently working as a public sector consultant at Capgemini Invent. She graduated with a BA from the University of Potsdam, majoring in Politics and Economics, and will continue her studies at the Hertie School of Governance to complete a Master of Public Policy. In the summer of 2014 she was granted a Fulbright Scholarship as part of the Diversity Initiative giving her the opportunity to study for one month at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. During her stay she pursued various academic courses focusing on persuasive speaking and entrepreneurship. Upon returning 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 and Katja Mishina are currently building up the Diversity working group within the FAeV.

## Allie Drexler

### Outreach

Allie Drexler completed her Fulbright year working as an English Teaching Assistant at a Gymnasium in Berlin and then continued to teach for an additional school year. Before starting Fulbright, Allie participated in the Internationales Parlaments Stipendium (IPS), during which she collaborated with over 100 other young professionals from around the world in the Bundestag. She continued her work in the Bundestag as a policy advisor for an MdB for almost two years, while also teaching English. Before moving to Berlin, Allie completed her Bachelor's degree in International Affairs at George Washington University in Washington, DC. She is currently working as a program coordinator at the Council on International Educational Exchange in Berlin. This is her second year serving as outreach chair. She is also vice chair of the American Bundestag Network.

## Henning Blunck

### Online Editor

Henning spent his Fulbright year (2010-11) at the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he received a Master's degree in Industrial Engineering. After completing his diploma studies in Dortmund, he went on to pursue a Ph.D. in production planning & control before joining Deutsche Post DHL Group as a data scientist. Henning has been associated with the German Fulbright Alumni Association since 2012, working mostly on the website.

## 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 Ph.D. in Computer Science. Simon grew 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.

# The Extended Board



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

## Eugen Litwinow

### Mentoring

Eugen Litwinow is the Co-Founder and Managing Director of Ellery Studio, a Berlin based strategic design agency focusing on renewable energy, urbanism, transformation and education. Born as Evgenij Alexandrowitsch Litwinow in Kazakhstan and raised as Eugen Litwinow in Fulda, he published a book about the change of forenames of Germans from the former USSR called “Mein Name ist Eugen – Gespräche über das Aufwachsen zwischen zwei Kulturen” (My Name is Eugen – Conversations about Growing Up Between Two Cultures). He continues to give talks and presents exhibitions on this topic. In 2011, he was awarded a Fulbright grant to pursue an MFA at Parsons School of Design in New York City. His experiences in New York led directly to the founding of Ellery Studio and the launching of many transatlantic collaborative projects. As the extended board Mentoring Chair, he is looking forward to redesigning classical modes of mentoring, exploring new educational pathways, and providing people with a platform to share knowledge on issues they’re passionate about.

## 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 Wehinger received his B.A. in English and Gender Studies at Humboldt Universität Berlin and his M.A. in North American Studies at the John-F.-Kennedy Institute of 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 from 2011-12. He is currently working in the Policy Lab Digital, Work & Society at the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Berlin. Felix joined the Extended Board in 2017 as the Mulert Award Chair.

## Anna-Elisabeth Schmitz

### International Coordinator

Lisa graduated from Ruhr-Universität Bochum with a B.A. in History and English & American Studies, and from Westfälische Hochschule with a B.A. in Journalism and Public Relations. She moved to Boston on a Fulbright scholarship in 2014 to obtain a 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. She studies political culture, in particular what effect growing inequality has on democratic culture. 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. Lisa is also a board member of the European Network of American Alumni Associations.

## 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 fellowship from 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.

## 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.

## Janani Ravi Contact for American Grantees

Janani Ravi completed two bachelor's degrees in 2014 at Virginia Tech. Following her studies she received a Fulbright scholarship and taught two years as an English Teaching Assistant at the Albrecht-Dürer-Gymnasium in Hagen from 2015-17. Since 2017, she has been pursuing her master's degree at the Ruhr University Bochum under the EELP program (Ethics- Economics, Law, and Politics) with a focus on sustainability and climate change. Janani is enthusiastic about engaging with the current Fulbrighters in Germany and is focused on helping them adjust to the difficulties of working and living abroad. She hopes to connect current Fulbrighters with alumni to increase their local network while in Germany. This is her first year as the US Grantees Chair.

## Sarah Abou Taka and Tristan Cristofolini Fulbright Alumni e.V. Office

Sarah Abou Taka and Tristan Cristofolini are the managers of the Fulbright Alumni e.V. office in Frankfurt am Main. Although they are not Fulbright Alumni, their devotion to the Fulbright cause is rooted in their interests as students of American Studies at Goethe-University. As Office Managers, their responsibilities include connecting members with questions to the board, upholding contacts with various partners and clients, and to keep things running smoothly. Sarah is studying to become an elementary school teacher, and Tristan will start his American Studies Master in the fall of 2019. They both hope that the Fulbright idea of connecting people of different cultures through scholarly exchange will persist in its current form and that the FAeV will continue to thrive, even during difficult political times.

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

*From left to right: Jürgen Simon, Elke Handschug-Brosin, Janani Ravi, Sarah Abou Taka and Tristan Cristofolini*



# Infographics for Action

## Breaking Down Germany's Renewable Energy and Electricity Supply Chains with Illustrated Infographics

by Bernd Riedel

Exactly five years ago I started Ellery Studio for Creative Strategy with Eugen Litwinow and Dodo Vögler. People often ask if Ellery is one of our surnames, but it's not – it's the street Eugen and I lived on in Brooklyn as Fulbright students at Parsons School of Design in New York. We were both interested in how design plays a role in decision-making and the shaping of policy, and when we returned to Germany, we created Ellery; initially as a loose association of collaborators and more recently as a multi-specialized firm that has brought home some of the biggest awards in infographics, as well as last year's Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund.

We don't have a lot of money to work with, but we have a great team that is motivated by an unceasing energy to create work that tackles big issues using playful graphics. Our aim is to bring people into issues they might otherwise find boring with bright and perky visuals. A lot of our work focuses on the Energiewende, Germany's once dynamic transition to clean energy that has, as of late, lost a lot of its shine. This flagging enthusiasm has a lot to do with the fact that people don't fully understand the energy supply system, and don't feel like they can meaningfully participate in it. It seems remote: power generation happens "out there" and then it miraculously comes into our homes to turn the lights on and power our devices, but it's not perceivable as a key element in our lives. By understanding the supply chain we can see exactly where less-polluting alternatives have an impact and how we can set them up in ways that benefit everyday people.

Last year we teamed up with the Institute for Climate Protection, Energy and Mobility (IKEM), a Berlin-based nonprofit, to create a project that breaks down the dense policy around Germany's move to renewable power sources. We created the **Infographic Energy Transition Coloring Book**, which uses illustrated infographics to tell the story of climate change and the importance of the energy transition. The story starts in Germany (and was indeed prompted



A spread from the "Infographic Energy Transition Coloring Book"

by workers in renewable energy who wanted to be able to teach their family and friends about what they were doing) but extends to all of Europe.

The book pays special attention to Germany's *Energiewende*. As an early developer of solar and wind energy, Germany's energy transition can teach us a lot. It's a process that has been full of surprises, some happy, like solar beer brewing (prost!) and citizen-owned energy, but also some less so, like the ongoing fight over coal extraction or the underperforming transport sector. Ellery Studio and IKEM donated their expertise and energy to produce the book, a project from the heart, realizing that the energy transition will only succeed if people are engaged.

There is a great deal of data about the dire effects of climate change, but much of the information on the new technologies and policies being developed to combat these problems is written in dense language. The reports of agencies and governments are full of technical terms, acronyms, and quantitative concepts that can be difficult to wrap your head around. Citizens have to overcome these barriers to effectively participate in decision-making.

The **Infographic Energy Transition Coloring Book** responds to a lack of civic engagement in the energy sphere but it

All photos: Ellery Studio



recognizes that engagement tools need to be lively and alluring. We need to hold people's attention in a world of distractions. That's why we use a lot of playful tropes – dancing animals, caricatures, and visual games – to lure people in. By doing something tactile and fun people step out of their lives – increasingly managed by digital devices – and into a world of learning. Coloring is restorative, it promotes mindfulness, and fosters both contemplation and creativity. Our team was eager to tap into this new learning style and its potential for combining education and entertainment. The book is in English, with the hopes of reaching a pan-European audience, but we are also planning on creating a German translation sometime in the near future for use in schools and within organizing environments.

Last year, we began the process of extending the lessons we learned in the creation of the coloring book to present a series of workshops, hackathons, and informal salons that bring together scientists and creative professionals: we found that it was helpful to have people working in the same room on tactile design-centered projects that had academic and creative inputs. With help from the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Grant we were able to bring together unlikely actors – a Spanish illustration collective, mobility experts, and researchers at the TU Berlin – to build a platform for ground-up collaboration and action.

We have seen that there is a real demand for tools that can teach people something in a non-didactic way, and people want to learn not only about the energy transition but also how they can play a role in the move away from carbon-intensive energy production, and we give them a tool to do just that. The energy of our young, international team combined with the connections we made as Fulbrighters are what helped the idea take root, making a speculative project like this possible.



Coloring in a page from the "Infographic Energy Transition Coloring Book"



The "Infographic Energy Transition Coloring Book" on a shelf at Ellery Studio, where a strong dinosaur theme is present

**Bernd Riedel** is a mapping specialist and infographic artist, and co-founder of Ellery Studio. He is also a faculty member at the Design Academy Berlin and is the former Vice President of the German Fulbright Alumni Association. Bernd spent two years as a Fulbright scholar at the Parsons School for Design where he completed an MFA in Transdisciplinary Design while additionally working as a research fellow at the Center for Data Arts. His master's thesis focused on agent-based mapping and visualization strategies for complex decision-making structures.



# Nervous Energy

## A Conduit for Cross-Cultural Understanding in a Georgian Women's Prison

by Page Benoit

The first time I caught bus 102 from Liberty Square to Rustavi Women's Prison Number Five, I had barely slept the night before. I was so nervous I thought I might be sick. During the hour and a half bus ride, panicked thoughts looped through my mind: "I've never been in a prison before." "I don't speak Georgian. How am I supposed to communicate with the guards?" "What if I'm a bad teacher?"

Upon acceptance to Georgia's Fulbright Program, I was placed at a technical university. However, the U.S. Embassy also asked me to take on an additional project. They wanted me to teach English in one of Georgia's only women's correctional facilities. It was a unique opportunity, and one I didn't want to pass on professionally or personally.

The previous May, I had graduated from Bard College with a B.A. in Human Rights and Gender and Sexualities. Given my narrow field of studies, the prospect of teaching English in a formal classroom setting was intimidating. I wasn't looking forward to the inevitable learning curve that comes with doing something new. For the two months prior to leaving, I channeled all my energy into preparing for the job. I read ESL theory textbooks and scoured the Internet for lesson plans. I also spent a lot of time just being nervous. Adding the fact that I was going to be teaching in a prison didn't help. By the time I arrived in-country, my nervous energy had passed the point of being productive and had instead turned sour. Some of my fears were realistic: the communication problem with the guards was daunting; also, inmates were in prison for a reason and, as someone who had little to no personal experience with people in prison, I couldn't help but be concerned for my safety. I knew I was a competent human rights teacher but in the face of the task ahead, I had a very bad case of imposter syndrome. If I was going to do this assignment, I had to find a way to turn my unproductive nervous energy into something useable. I wasn't sure how I was going to make the transition from scared human rights teacher to competent English teacher.

On my first day, as I went through security and two checkpoints, my anxiety grew. I had never been in a place with so much barbed wire or watchtowers manned by men with guns. What had I gotten myself into? The truth was I'd gotten myself into a classroom. I hadn't anticipated how simple it would be until I stood in front of my first class of 15 students. They were women ranging in age from 20 to 60, from all over the world. As I looked out at them, something in me clicked. Even though the location made me nervous – the closed door, the bars on the window and no guard in the room – I realized that these women were there because they wanted to learn and I was there because I wanted to teach. If I thought about it in those simple terms, there was nothing to be afraid of. It was a place to start.

So start I did. For the next nine months I taught three classes twice a week: two intermediate classes and one beginner. I worked in two prison blocks, each with a different security level, although the prison never elaborated on what that meant. The building was heated in the winter but during the warmer months, when the windows and doors stayed open, swallows flew in and nested in the rafters. The classrooms themselves were functional:



*A cave monastery and UNESCO World Heritage Site; photo: Susan Benoit*



*Narikala Fortress in Tbilisi, Georgia; photo: Reed Benoit*

a whiteboard, desks, but no Wi-Fi. My materials were pre-screened by security each visit, which included taking the caps off of my pens and shuffling through all the pages of my notebooks.

When it came to the teaching itself, the learning curve I had so feared in the beginning was in fact a reality. It took some time to discover what kind of lessons my students were willing to participate in. At first, grammar was the most well received. As we got to know each other better and I became more comfortable with my teaching, I was able to calm down. I learned some Georgian. I began to see my students for who they were and not for where they were. They did not let the prison define them and, with time, neither did I. With this realization my lessons got better. I expanded what I taught. We had more discussion and debate classes. Of course, there were pitfalls: when you're using a textbook and one of the questions is, "What's the biggest mistake you've ever made?" it lands differently in a prison than it would in other classrooms. I quickly learned to adjust the lessons that were not applicable to my students' lives. Instead of talking about the last time they went to the movies, we learned the English vocabulary for cross-stitching because the women took classes on the subject in their free time. Though I had the final say on lesson content, it was important to me to let the students guide the subjects that we covered as much as possible. It felt like a collective accomplishment when five months into our classes, my intermediate students went from a beginning intermediate level to an advanced intermediate level. We'd done it together and, of all my experiences as a Fulbright ETA, my favorite day was the day I gave my students their new higher-level textbooks.

As I write this with the final few weeks of my Fulbright position approaching, my experience at Rustavi Prison Number Five stands out as uniquely rewarding. It wasn't just that my students had the good intention to learn English that made our lessons successful, but it was our connection on a human level that allowed me to relax and make use of my nervous energy. Their grace and eagerness to learn English was the conduit I needed to turn my nervous energy into something else, something productive. My work at the prison was the heart of my grant. There, I learned valuable teaching skills, to always be as open minded as possible and to have confidence in myself.

The Fulbright mission is about creating mutual understanding between countries, which was embodied during my time through working not just with Georgians, but also with women from all over Eastern Europe. I encountered many different learning styles and cultures, yet we managed to come together in this unusual situation. There is nothing easy about teaching English, however, if you find a handful of motivated students who you can connect with on a personal level, you can take that positive energy and spread it to other places. I hope to be able to do just that in the future.



**Page Benoit** holds a B.A. in Human Rights and Gender and Sexualities from Bard College. From 2018-2019, she was a Fulbright ETA in Tbilisi, Georgia at Prison Number Five and Spektri College. In the fall of 2019, she will begin her M.Phil. in International Peace Studies at Trinity College in Dublin.

Dewald at Daimler AG;  
photo: A. Dewald



# From Fulbright to Fuel Cells

## Writing My Master's Thesis at Daimler AG's Incubator Lab1886

by Andreas Dewald

It was on a cold December evening approximately two weeks before my graduation from Purdue University: I was in the middle of finishing up my last paper for my master's, when I got the long-awaited call for an interview with Daimler AG. As I would continue to finish my German master's and had to find a thesis topic with a company, I was beyond excited that my application had gotten through. But it wasn't until after the interview that I really understood what a wonderful opportunity had opened up for me.

My internship and the following master's thesis would not only be about a promising future technology, the fuel cell, but also within Daimler AG's incubator, Lab1886. The name Lab1886 originates from Gottlieb Daimler's and Carl Benz's invention of the first automobile in 1886. Since its foundation in 2007, Lab1886's goal has been to support the company with innovative business models to better master the challenges of the future. Being integrated into Daimler AG allows for a combination of the benefits of both - the start-up and the corporate world.

On my first day I was already able to experience the creative and innovative way of working in the lab. In small teams with flat hierarchies, highly motivated people work on different projects following a three-phase plan to create ideas, incubate and then finally commercialize them. As the lab is globally connected many colleagues speak English and the teams are diverse, which accounts for a lot of enriching exchanges of ideas and experiences. The projects in the lab range from flinc, a ride sharing service for commuters, to Volocopter, an air taxi for future transportation. One of the most successful projects that originated from Lab1886 was the car sharing platform car2go.

The project that I am part of is the stationary fuel cell project. Its goal is to use the Daimler fuel cell within a CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral stationary power supply system. One possible application for such a system would be data centers, as they consume huge amounts of power. The concept builds upon renewable energies like wind and solar that would provide the main power for the data center. Excessive energy from the renewables would power an electrolyzer that would split water into hydrogen and oxygen (Power to Gas), and that hydrogen could be stored on-site. In case of a power outage or less power available from renewables, the hydrogen would be "burned" in the stationary fuel cell, providing electricity to the data center. This process involves recombining hydrogen and oxygen in the fuel cell to create electricity. Only water is released as an emission, which makes the fuel cell, in combination with renewables, a clean and sustainable technology.

With my master's thesis I am supporting the fuel cell team in further validating this concept from a technical, as well as financial, point of view. This combination of both the technical as well as financial aspects is very interesting and provides a lot of great insights into a technological field that I am very passionate about. Rising energy demand due to the digitalization of our society, amongst other factors, leads to higher pollution of the environment through burning of fossil fuels to meet that demand. As renewable energies like wind and solar are basically infinite sources of energy, but usually not stable, the challenge is how to store that energy. The concept that I am working on right now tackles exactly that challenge and provides a promising opportunity for a clean and reliable energy production in the future.



From top to bottom:  
Daimler stationary fuel cell in a data center; photo: Daimler AG  
Lab interns visiting the Sindelfingen plant; photo: A. Dewald  
Concept of a renewable energy system for data centers; photo: Daimler AG

My time at the lab also provides me with great learning opportunities through visits of the production plant (see group picture), a workshop about leadership, and other events involving, for example, the ideation of new business concepts. In the lab as well as at Daimler in general, many colleagues come from different cultural backgrounds and I really appreciate that I get to continue to work in an international environment where my Fulbright experience continues to show its effects.



Prior to going to the US on a Fulbright scholarship, **Andreas Dewald** graduated with a bachelor's degree in Engineering Management from Hochschule Darmstadt. At Purdue University in Indiana he pursued a master's degree in Technology, Leadership and Innovation: he received his degree at the end of 2018. His passion for Fulbright led him to participate in the Fulbright Conference twice, as well as lead the Purdue Fulbright Association for one semester. After his return to Germany, Andreas joined the Fulbright board as Vice President of Members. Andreas is currently writing his master's thesis about the stationary use of fuel cell technology at Daimler AG and in Engineering Management. He is passionate about technology, future mobility, intercultural exchange, and connecting people.

# Middle School Magic

by Samantha Shipeck

The past decade of my life has been shaped by a series of unforeseen opportunities and decisions. That is probably the case for most people, but as someone chronically interested in patterns, the connection between these decisions always leaves me with a sense of wonder.

This story starts, ends, and begins again with middle school. When I was fourteen, I graduated from the parochial school I had attended from K-8 and moved on to the public high school where I lived. I had had Spanish for most of that time, and given the opportunity to choose from a larger variety of languages, I decided to take German, following an inkling that it would be interesting to me. I had no idea then – when does anyone, after all? – that this choice would be the guiding force behind the rest of everything that followed.

I had generally had fantastic teachers throughout my schooling, but my German teachers upped the ante. In my second year of learning German, my class merged with an incoming group of freshmen who had started German at the middle school level. With me outnumbered and still relatively new to the district, this could have been a recipe for isolation, but instead, we became collaborators in what felt like a secret world. Without many opportunities to use German with native speakers in suburban Pittsburgh at the time, my classmates and I made our own contexts for communication. German felt, to me, like our secret language. We could joke with each other in the halls, develop alternate personas, and eventually express ourselves authentically using German. We encouraged each other and pushed each other forward. All the while, my teachers in these years were instrumental. One, with visible passion, connected the language deeply to cultural history. The other made German real to us by showing us connections, making it comprehensible, and, beyond anything else, making it possible. I still recall the first time I left the classroom and thought something in German on the way to my locker. In that moment, I was not suspended between translation – I was present in the wonderful space of occupying two contexts at once for the first time, and I became hooked.

My experience in German class directly led to me deciding, when I was sixteen, to become a German teacher. I went to Germany for the first time at seventeen via AATG (Passau) and then again at eighteen with a place in a Goethe Institut program (Munich). After dual BAs in German language and cultural studies and Russian that had me studying in Pittsburgh, Augsburg, and Moscow, I felt myself at the crossroads of continuing German Studies or starting the

path to receiving my teaching certification. I applied for a Fulbright Combined Grant to Austria in pursuit of both, and when that did not pan out, I accepted admission to the MAT program at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education. The program comprised master's coursework, as well as a year-long teaching internship.

My internship placement brought the next unforeseen opportunity: I landed in the Barack Obama Academy of International Studies, a sixth through twelfth grade school in Pittsburgh Public School District. The whole while I had been imagining my future as a German teacher, I did so with a high school context in mind. Most of the public sentiment I catch wind of about middle school is negative; even I looked back at my junior high experience with disdain as an older teenager and younger adult. Though I went in with a relatively neutral mindset, albeit more focused on the high school classes, fate had something else in store. My mentor teacher taught all six grades, so I could have theoretically started anywhere, but as it happened, it worked out that my first class was a seventh grade class. This was the first group that was ever “my students.” From nearly the start of the school year, while I was rapidly absorbing information about language acquisition and pedagogy in the evenings, with the support of my mentor teacher and university supervisor, I began teaching for the first time. Within days, I felt something within me expand and grow out of nothing. Sometimes, it felt like a surprising sense of patience (my primary vice is that I can be short-tempered); other times, it was spontaneity (I am, in general, very planned). I realized that what this feeling was primarily stemming from though was engagement – I found myself completely engaged by and submersed in the world of my middle schoolers and the space we could co-create. Though I appreciated the high school classes I worked with just as much, I left that school year calling myself a “middle school teacher” as though it were as fundamental as any other part of my identity.

At the end of my year in Pittsburgh, I was again at a fork in the road. I had planned to find a teaching position in the area, but I also felt a pull back to the Fulbright Program. This time, I applied for an English Teaching Assistantship in Germany, and I was accepted and placed at the Borwinsschule, an Integrierte Gesamtschule in Rostock, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. I had not chosen MV at all; rather, I had listed Bundesländer that statistically needed teachers, in addition to Bavaria, where all of my previous experience in Germany had been. I joke now that perhaps the Fulbright Commission saw that and elected to throw me as far from Bavaria as one can get without landing directly in the sea.



From top to bottom:

At SHMS, learning German means expanding horizons beyond the classroom. 17 eighth grade students prepared all year for their exchange program in Munich in May. Photo: Valerie Rousse

A collaboration with teacher Brad Hosbach's eighth grade art students resulted in the "Herz!" these sixth grade German students are wearing during "Oktoberfest." This long-standing SHMS tradition introduces the whole middle school to southern German culture via music, thanks to director and teacher Henry Pearlberg. Photo: Deirdre Abrahamsson

Achtung, Gemüse! Sometimes hands aren't the only things flying up in the air. Photo: Deirdre Abrahamsson

Rostock quickly became a precious place to me, but I had no way of foreseeing that when I was laboring over the decision to go. Though I wanted to spend more time in Germany, gain a wider perspective of German culture, and expand my teaching experience, I was apprehensive of the idea of starting over. At the end of my first year teaching, I had reflected that the attitudes I wanted most to emulate for my students, particularly my middle schoolers, and the ones that I wanted them to practice, were bravery and kindness. I took this as a chance to be brave.

I find it challenging to express how much my Fulbright year in Rostock means to me succinctly. It was also too difficult for me to keep it to only one year; when I learned that it was possible to apply for a second year of teaching assistantship through the Pädagogischer Austauschdienst, I did so, and was accepted. In my two years in Rostock, I worked with classes of all ages in English, German as a Second Language, and Russian. Yet again, though I worked with all my heart in all of my classes, it was my middle schoolers, particularly those in seventh and eighth grade, who most engaged me. Whether I was mentoring seventh and eighth graders during their projects for the federal language competition; setting up a pen pal project with my former students in Pittsburgh; teaching US geography through the lens of the motorcycle trips I had taken with my dad as a teenager; sharing information about the US from perspectives outside of my own to elevate diverse voices and encouraging my students' own self-reflection; hosting a Super Bowl party (though I am not actually a football person at all) or a Rice-Krispies Treats "baking" session; or overseeing students create short stop-motion films on any aspect of US American culture, I constantly reminded myself that none of it would have been possible if not for my students' incredible openness and willingness to explore.

These qualities exemplify why middle school is, to me, pure magic. The pre-teen and early teen brain sits at the precipice of a wild journey into opening perspectives and forming identity. Now in my third middle school teaching experience, at Strath Haven Middle School in Wallingford-Swarthmore School District, I assert with confidence that this quality is the most fruitful ground for language learning and cultural exploration. In their daily lives, middle schoolers are surrounded by outside influences while constantly testing their instincts and desires against the expectations of those around them. They are beginning to overturn each rock of possibility in pursuit of the aspects of their identities that suit them the most. As language learners, these characteristics are fantastic assets for the development of cross-



*In the fall, Fulbright alumnus Ronny Gündel visited Samantha Shipeck's middle school classes as part of the "Meet-a-German" campaign. Here they are with a seventh grade class after a Q&A session in English and German.  
Photo: Deirdre Abrahamsson*

cultural competence. I teach solely in a middle school now, and I have the privilege of having my students for all three of those formative years. Though I have only just reached the end of year one, I can already attest to the growth in my students as German-learners, and I am excited to see where the rest of the journey takes them.

And a journey it truly is: On one of the last days of school this year, my eighth graders flipped through the "Klassenbuch" full of "Das bin ich!" pages they designed at the start of the year. Many of them were surprised by what they wrote or how they looked in their instant-camera snapshots from back then. Though it may not always feel like it when one settles into the routine of the school day, middle school is movement. They move through the highs and the lows and bring that energy to the classroom, which, when seen as a virtue and encouraged, creates momentum. My students keep me on my toes both mentally and physically. And I try to do the same to them, whether I'm sending them on scavenger hunts for cultural facts, having them read and re-tell a story in a relay race, or asking them to participate by catching a plush vegetable instead of raising their hand.

I last want to impart that middle school is expansion and connection. This is the case on small as well as larger scales. In the classroom daily, I am connected to them by virtue of what they share. We often start with a class chat about current events in their lives and at school, and in sharing their experiences in as much German as they can, my students implicitly draw connections to each other, whether that's learning that the person across the room, with whom they rarely talk outside of class, also vehemently detests mayonnaise, or whether that's learning about their desk partner's personal experience standing up to a bully. It is greatly valuable that this kind of chatting helps students acquire language (as long as it is meaningful and my German is comprehensible). Even more so, it is a great advantage that forming relationships is such an integral part of this process.

My students also have the extraordinary opportunity to participate in an exchange program in Munich in 8th grade. In the fall, they host their German partners; in the spring, we go to Germany together. The period of building relationships with their hosts through WhatsApp creates anticipation for their own immersion in German life, often for the first time. Having a host sibling and living in a host family roots one immediately – "German culture" is no longer abstract or tokenized to be a set amount of experiences or perspectives. When my students sat in a circle in an empty classroom at the Gymnasium where their partners studied and exchanged impressions from the day prior, sharing stories of how their host families do things this way or that way, they were implicitly learning that there are diverse ways of being German. This also offered a chance for reflecting that there are diverse ways of just being themselves. As I watched my students exploring their "self in another place" for the first time – not just as a traveler or a guest, but as someone invested in learning German and excited for the path before them – I felt connected to my 17-year-old self in Bavaria for the first time, nearly 10 years prior. And I thought of my 14-year-old self who decided to start learning German simply on a hunch.

This is where my story comes full circle. At the end of the day, I hope for my students to keep their middle school magic and find something that resonates with them wholeheartedly, the way that German has for me, whatever that something may be. I admit that I am stubborn enough not to let go of places meaningful to me; however, none of this connection would have been possible without those that opened up these electric opportunities to me at the start. I am grateful to the Fulbright Program for helping me find my fit in the world, and I am grateful to my middle school students for allowing me to participate daily in the wonderful, dynamic world that is theirs. I am excited to continue to see it grow.

**Samantha Shipeck** is an educator currently teaching German and advising the Rainbow Alliance club at a middle school outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her prior teaching experience was in Rostock, Germany via Fulbright and the Pädagogischer Austauschdienst, and in Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh Public School District through the University of Pittsburgh. She spent her adolescence side-jobbing as an electrician's assistant, making her connection to this prompt all the more resonant.



# Moving from Individual Experience to Institutional Change

by EFDI Team (Courtney Moffett-Bateau, Tunay Altay, and Dr. Susanne Hamscha)

In May 2018, the European Fulbright Commissions established the European Fulbright Diversity Initiative (EFDI) to address the complex and international dimensions of diversity at Fulbright. The aim of the EFDI is to produce practical institutional results that encourage and strengthen diversity procedures at Fulbright Germany, in Europe and beyond.

As part of the larger EFDI project, the 1st International Diversity Conference (September 21-23, 2018) catalyzed this process with 180 participants from 20 countries. Keynotes, panel discussions, presentations and workshops provided space for Fulbrighters to discuss institutional change at Fulbright in conjunction with six ad-hoc task forces covering the Fulbright lifecycle. The EFDI Conference marked a crucial step in articulating a European commitment to prioritizing issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

It was an ambitious undertaking over a period of 12 months with 1 major diversity conference in Berlin, 2 roundtable workshops in Bulgaria and Germany, 6 temporary task forces (with over 80 participants), and feedback from 8 diversity advisors who reviewed the recommendations. In total, 30 global Fulbright commissions participated in the Global Diversity Practices Report, and we developed 52 recommendations with 220 contributors.



*Diversity Conference Participants; photo:Stefan Zeitz*

Never has there been an initiative of this kind in Fulbright's 70+ year history. Today Fulbright has even greater potential for being an agent of change, as our diversity strategy exemplifies. The EFDI pilot phase has shown that the promotion of diversity, inclusion, and



*Courtney Moffett-Bateau, EFDI Diversity Liaison in conversations at the Diversity Conference; photo:Stefan Zeitz*

equity within the Fulbright realm is necessary and important. The new plan pledges to further develop institutional infrastructures already in place by matching The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' commitment to diversity with local iterations. It is time to move forward together with commissions worldwide – mutually reinforcing each other's efforts, pooling resources to create synergies and providing extra funding where necessary, while respecting the commissions' autonomy and specificity.

## What's next?

We are happy to report that EFDI received strong support at the global meeting of Fulbright Executive Directors in Washington DC in May 2019. It was suggested to scale the project to a global level. As the Fulbright lifecycle describes the experiences of a Fulbright grantee from their grant period to their alumni phase (i.e., from being informed about Fulbright to the application process, orientations, stay abroad, and returning as an alumnus/a), we want to hear from you about your experiences of diversity! Please follow Fulbright Germany on social media and share your stories with us online! We will continue to update you on our progress with our Fulbright diversity strategy and look forward to receiving your input!

This article summarizes the main points of Fulbright's ground-breaking Diversity pilot-project that includes the support of 220 participants from 30 countries.

For more information please visit:

[www.fulbright.de/EFDI](http://www.fulbright.de/EFDI)



## FULBRIGHT ALUMNI E.V.

### 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:

- 2019 Fulbright Association 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., USA
- 2019 ENAM Conference “Disinformation: Fake News of New Trolls” in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria
- 2018 ENAM Conference “One Europe – One Transatlantic Partnership” in Cologne, Germany
- 2018 Fulbright Association 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference in Puebla, Mexico
- 2018 “Alumni-Focused Strategy Seminar: Best Practices, Success Stories and Alumni Associations” in Yerevan, Armenia
- 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

## 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.

## Advisory Board

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# The Unifying Force of Water

## An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on Water Values at the Vatican

by Jörg Geier

It was late summer 2016 when Silvia Zimmermann del Castillo, a fellow member of the Club of Rome, a global sustainability-focused think tank, approached me on whether I would like to work with her on organizing a water conference at the Vatican. What initially sounded a bit surreal – a water conference at the Vatican, which at least on some level, appears to be an institution from another world – proved to be an eye-opening experience.

After some initial hesitation, I decided to take on the responsibility of coordinating this global conference. Not only would it allow me to draw on my previous experience in the field of sustainable development and build on existing networks, it would also enable me to work with one of the world's oldest institutions that is uniquely positioned to make a difference in the world for the better both from a spiritual and environmental perspective.

Following an initial exchange of thoughts on conference focus, design, partners, and participants, we started becoming more concrete. During the preparations, Silvia was in Buenos Aires, Argentina, while I was still spending significant time in the San Francisco Bay Area to conclude a research project that had brought me back to the city of my Fulbright scholarship 10 years prior. Our counterpart at the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture (a department of the Roman Curia, fostering the relationship of the Catholic Church with different cultures) was naturally based in Rome. We had our initial conference call kicking off the joint initiative between the Vatican and the Club of Rome in October 2016. The Skype meeting was followed by a personal get-together in Rome in November 2016.

*“Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right [...] is essential to human survival and [...] is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.”*

*Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter Laudato si', Chapter 2, para. 30*

We quickly realized that the designated date of the “Watershed” conference, March 22, 2017, World Water Day, bookended by workshops the days before and after the main event, did not leave much time for planning and implementation. With the help of various partner organizations, we were able to pull it off in an accelerated manner – a true team effort! We activated an eclectic group of speakers, ranging from a former NASA astronaut (Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Lindbergh Fellow for Aerospace History at the Smithsonian Institute and former NOAA administrator) and the Director of the World Bank's Water Global Practice (Jennifer Sara) to spiritual leaders, which included two cardinals (H.E. Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi and H.E. Cardinal Peter Turkson) and a West African Elder (author and teacher Dr. Malidoma Somé of Burkina Faso). Hollywood actor Matt Damon, whose non-profit Water.org brings safe water and sanitation to developing countries, and HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, Chairman of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, delivered video messages. Many other notable speakers complemented the program.



*"What lessons does space travel hold from living in a closed ecosystem?"*  
Keynote speech by Dr. Kathryn D. Sullivan, Lindbergh Fellow for Aerospace History, Smithsonian Institute; NOAA administrator (ret.) and NASA astronaut (ret.)

Welcome speeches by H.E. Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture and of the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology; and by Jörg Geier, Associate Director, Watershed

Pope Francis greetings attendees following his General Audience on St. Peter's Square

Photos: Barbara Alcaraz Silva and Jörg Geier



More than 150 participants with a range of backgrounds – ministers, ambassadors, NGOs, corporate, and Vatican representatives – attended with some of them also contributing to the hands-on facilitated workshops. Pope Francis thanked the conference organizers in an inspiring message during his General Audience on St. Peter's Square in the morning of World Water Day, which led over to Watershed in the afternoon.

The conference did not only address water challenges through a value and values lens but also underlined the need for interfaith and intercultural dialogue during a time that requires all of us to work together. As with other global problems such as climate change and biodiversity loss, there was a growing sentiment that a concerted global multi-stakeholder effort – including NGOs, international and governmental organizations, and global corporations – is the only way to deal with one of the most urgent crises of the present day: The world's demand for fresh water is growing so fast that by 2030, agriculture, industry, and expanding cities will face such scarce supplies that the confrontation could disrupt economic development and threaten political stability and public health. Business as usual is not an option anymore!

My own take-away from the conference experience can be summed up as follows: Mutual understanding based on the respect of cultural differences, as promoted by Senator Fulbright and the Fulbright Program, is a key ingredient for any setting that brings together a variety of mindsets, disciplines, and faiths from different countries.

Not least thanks to my own exposure to a multitude of viewpoints throughout my Fulbright scholarship, I have been able to take a proactive approach in the promotion of peace and mutual understanding, a value at the heart of Watershed. Especially in light of the current political climate on a global level, with populism – right and left of center – on the rise, it is more important than ever to take an active stand rather than be a bystander when it comes to the values that led to the Fulbright Program's creation in the aftermath of World War II. It is up to us to build on those values with our actions – in our professional or our personal lives.

For more information on Watershed, including videos of speeches, please visit [www.worldwatervalues.org](http://www.worldwatervalues.org). For questions, please feel free to contact the author directly via [jgeier \(a\) fulbrightmail.org](mailto:jgeier(a)fulbrightmail.org).

**Jörg Geier** was a German Fulbrighter at Golden Gate University, San Francisco, where he completed his MBA (2001-03). With an international background in the private sector, think tanks and academia, Joerg's passion is the area of green startups, innovation ecosystems, and impact investing. He works as a consultant and has previously focused on leadership development and capacity building.



# Luminovo: New Light

by Sebastian Schaal

“AI is the new electricity!” This famous quote from one of our professors at Stanford University, Andrew Ng, is rooted in the fundamental belief that AI will have a similarly transformative effect on the industry as electricity had 100 years ago. In addition to having the potential to change every industry, the topic of AI has had a very lasting impact on both of our lives in particular. Timon Ruban and I, Sebastian Schaal, both Fulbright grantees, founded Luminovo in 2017 and are now proudly leading a team of about 15 employees. We build tailored Deep Learning solutions for startups from the Silicon Valley and mid-sized German companies, as well as for established DAX corporations.

But first, let's start from the beginning. While living in Europe, we both started our careers in electrical engineering fields: Timon at ETH Zürich, whereas I stayed close to home and went to the Technical University Munich (TUM) while also completing the CDTM, an interdisciplinary add-on study program. After we both graduated, we decided to go for an academic moonshot and apply to top schools in the US. Thanks to the Fulbright grant, we were able to secure the financing needed to pursue our Master's studies at Stanford University.

At Stanford, we not only found an amazing group of friends but also quickly realized that all the math that had been drilled into us during our Bachelor's was actually very useful when studying the topic that actually sits behind the hype of AI today: Machine Learning. It was love at first sight, so both of us twisted our degrees as much as possible into this direction.

Timon and I initially met during the Fulbright orientation in March 2015, and our friendship started to develop when we arrived on the campus. Half a year into our programs, we decided to share an apartment, quickly realizing that we did not just enjoy throwing large parties together but also loved nerding-out about the latest Deep Learning papers - a shared interest that is still the basis for our work together today.

Through the CDTM program, I was exposed to many young founders very early on, which brought the idea of founding a company onto my personal horizon. The time at Stanford only intensified this, and was also the period of time when Timon began warming up the idea. You simply cannot live at Stanford without being confronted by all the alumni founder stories like Google, Nvidia, Cisco or Paypal. So, we ended up running through most of the entrepreneurship curriculum, further pushing toward actually founding a company one day.



*Biking around the Google "Googleplex" campus in Mountain View, California*

My time at Stanford was too short for sure: I rushed through my Master since I had a second degree at the TUM to finish. In the last academic year, I took the skills I had learned at Stanford and applied them in two tech startups, developing computer vision algorithms. At the same time, Timon did a summer internship at Google and finished his coursework while engaging in cutting edge research in Stanford's leading AI labs.

Telling your friend that you want to start a company with him is not as easy as it sounds: it is easy when you crack a joke about it after a few beers, but looking someone in the eye, actually meaning it, and then waiting for their response is a totally different story. What if the other person enjoys you as a buddy but could never imagine working with you? Bringing a topic like this to the table will probably also change the dynamic of a friendship forever. Luckily, we both agreed that we would form a kickass duo and wanted to give the idea of founding a company a fair shot.

The next steps were pretty clear: we felt that both from an economic (there were not many AI talents in Germany just yet) and from a moral (we were highly funded by the German government) perspective it would make a lot of sense to start back in Germany, and thus, embodying the Fulbright's ambassadorial program mission. We wanted to take everything we have learned in the valley back home to accelerate the adoption of AI and help companies gen-



*Surfs up! Celebrating graduation in Stanford Stadium*

erate actual business value from it. But what exactly this would mean, we did not yet know. Once back in Munich, we brainstormed for a few months, trying to identify how to best use our potential and create as deep an impact as possible, eventually deciding to launch a deep learning software development "boutique" to build tailored applications, and founded Luminovo in December 2017.

In the beginning, you have nothing to show other than your CV and a good story to tell, trying to convince FFF (friends, family, and fools) to be your first customer or guinea pig. Luckily, we managed to jump over that hurdle, acquired our first customers, and quickly started growing our team, one of our most valuable assets we have today. We are super happy that we could convince talents from our alma maters Stanford, ETH, TUM, and CDTM, but also from other great institutions like Cambridge, to join our vision of driving progress by augmenting human intelligence. This amazing team helped us create actual value for our clients across various industries, from ProSieben-Sat1 in media, Infineon in semiconductors, or Audi in automotive, by incorporating AI into their business processes.



*Time to say goodbye: smiling for a photo during commencement weekend at Stanford; photo: Sebastian Schaal*

But what exactly does Luminovo offer? As of now, our claim is that no matter at what stage a company is, we offer a solution to leverage the power of AI for their processes. In the early stages, this often means helping them navigate the path from understanding AI to pioneering relevant use-cases. If it makes sense for the client to build a custom solution with a partner, then our work really begins. We love to solve problems by building reliable deep learning systems and integrating them into the business processes to create actual value.

On our journey, we have encountered a family of applications that have a common denominator: They are best solved by humans and machines together in the future. This is often the case when we are facing a repetitive workflow, where the human is currently making decisions based on studying an image or reading a text. This can be anything from moderating content for a media company to analyzing legal documents. The idea of a human and an AI solving a task together, i.e. co-processing it, is the basis of our hybrid technology. We make it very easy for a business to take a data labeling, monitoring, or extraction task, plug our hybrid technology into it, and watch how the AI is continuously learning and liberating the human from the obvious cases. When quality is more important than full-automation, or the latter is not even possible, this approach is, in our opinion, the way to go.



*Enjoying the full Stanford campus experience! photo: Sebastian Schaal*

An exciting project we are currently working on is a contract-analysis-engine for data processing agreements, which became commonplace after the launch of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Instead of a lawyer having to check for the same 13 criteria all by themselves, we have installed AI systems that automatically highlight the relevant passages in a contract that belong to the current question at hand. If the human wants to take more or less context into account, they can give feedback to the model. Over time, the context detection becomes precise enough that the model can often go one step further and make its own decision to determine if the context at hand is sufficient or is not in accordance with the GDPR. Thereby, we are creating a solution that can step-by-step liberate the lawyer from reading standard phrases but instead focus on the critical cases.

The case we did for ProSiebenSat.1 is probably even more visual. They currently have around 30 people employed who do nothing else other than screening content for violations of youth protection. With the current workforce, they can only manage to skim through 5% of sample



Luminovo Chairman Sebastian Schuon with founders Sebastian Schaal and Timon Ruban; photo: Luminovo

footage. To combat this, we built a computer vision model that automatically scans nudity in all media content and also uses human feedback to keep learning from edge cases. The first model we built was already able to achieve an automation rate of 30%, without having even seen ProSiebenSat.1 content before. Now it is running in production and gets smarter and more tailored to the specific content daily. For us, it doesn't really matter if the application is in the insurance, finance, media, medical or any other industry, as long as it is based on text or images.

One and a half years into Luminovo, I still enjoy going to work every day, even though I know that the next crisis might not be far away. But that is the life of a startup founder: you are constantly walking a fine line between feeling like you can change the world and feeling as if an existential crisis is coming on. What gets me out of bed every morning is knowing we can make an actual impact on people's lives – our co-workers and clients – and on top of that do so with a technology that I am deeply passionate about. We will try to continue to live up to the promise of our name Luminovo and bring new light to the world. If AI is the new electricity, I hope we help transition it from a dangerous source of energy to one of the biggest value creators for this century.



Luminovo Team; photo: Luminovo

**Sebastian Schaal** graduated top of his class from TU Munich and the CDTM. During his MSc at Stanford he focused on management science and machine learning. He worked as a consultant at McKinsey before returning to engineering at Intel and deep tech startups.



# Reimagining Courage

by Khadija Ali and Neil Doughty

A gong sounds, and conversation stops. For a long minute, five hundred Fulbrighters share something new – silence. Gazes wander. Some seek eye contact. Others avoid it. This is a moment to reflect. In the coming days, these Fulbrighters will share groundbreaking research, sing Czech Bluegrass, and give a standing ovation to a former U.S. Ambassador. But for a moment, they are still.

Each year, the Fulbright Berlin Seminar facilitates an exchange across disciplines: research, art, politics, and ideas mingle for five days in the heart of Berlin. Speeches and workshops are punctuated by moments of silence, music, and other artistic interventions. Distinguished guests share stages with recent undergraduates, and all attendees hope to learn from each other. As first-time Fulbright ETAs, both of us have had many a conversation in our first six months as ETAs reflecting on our time in Germany so far, and we were curious how the Berlin Seminar would shape up. Who will we meet? What would our peers share? What conversations would we learn most from?

To both of us, this year's theme, Courage, ran like a thread through the patchwork of experiences, emboldening participants to explore overlapping interests. In his opening remarks on Saturday afternoon, Fulbright Director Dr. Oliver Schmidt challenged the audience: "Despite its positive connotation, courage is neither good nor evil. It is a means to any end. Reexamine it," he encouraged, "and see if you can bring new understanding with you when you leave." With this mission in mind, the 2019 Berlin Seminar began.

Almost immediately, attendees' courage – and perhaps social endurance – was put to the test. For two hours, German and US grantees and alumni got to know each other in speed-dating style networking sessions. Rene Nissen, a German grantee headed to the University of Texas, got tips from an alumna on where to live in Austin, TX. Charlie Jersey, an American ETA in Germany, wondered, "Is going up to new people courageous? Am I really, just by doing

some small thing, displaying courage? These thoughts were only rarely brought to light, but for me they impacted the emotional tone of the entire conference and made people and their actions seem much more genuine." And so from the first evening, new friendships were formed, and for many, the best part of the conference had already begun.

The rest of the evening consisted of "Saturday Night Live" format entertainment, which opened and closed with bluegrass music by East Tennessee State University Professor and former Fulbright Scholar Dr. Lee Bigwood and his wife, Emily Bigwood. The couple performed a few traditional bluegrass tunes and then surprised everyone with a tune written by a Czech bluegrass enthusiast. The night closed with a round of stomping, clapping, and singing in both English and Czech accompanied by Dr. Bigwood's fiddle, leaving us all in a warm and convivial spirit.

Sunday was spent in conversation. The day opened with a panel discussing the "European Idea." Later, grantees swapped experiences at the World Cafe as a way of sorting through their struggles and triumphs, and seeing how their peers have dealt with common issues. After lunch, Courtney Moffett-Bateau and other members of the European Fulbright Diversity Initiative team showcased the initial steps that have been taken towards making Fulbright a more inclusive program. For many of us, we found that the EFDI is a salient example of how grantees' voices and ideas are crucial to getting initiatives off the ground.

Later that evening, it was Jeffery Bleich who stole the show. Jokingly introducing himself as a "half-brighter," the former US Ambassador to Australia and current Chairman of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board addressed the most pressing concern for most grantees in the room: representing an administration you disagree with. "Set your moral boundaries early," he advised. "If you gain favor by violating your conscience, you'll lose that favor when you

Grantees gather after a city tour in front of the Brandenburger Tor for a group photo; photo: Marius Schwarz



Proudly displaying the "Fulbright spirit" in front of the Udk!  
photo: Stefan Zeitz



The Fulbright Jazz Ensemble, led by Sara Decker, performs in the Udk! concert hall for the second year in a row; photo: Marius Schwarz

stand up for your beliefs later." Ann Hartlieb, an American ETA in Spain was especially moved by Bleich's speech. "One of the biggest impressions I had was when Ambassador Bleich said, 'we can develop and practice [courage] by listening to our inclination,'" she reflected. "I realized that I don't have to be wonderful the first time I share a particular topic, but with practice and listening to my personal inclination to share multiple perspectives, I am acting courageously and am developing that skill." "Courage," Bleich concluded, "is not a decision to be made. It is a habit to be cultivated." A standing ovation closed the final formal event of the evening.

The night was still young. After dinner, everyone headed to Backfabrik, a Fulbright Alumnus-owned performance space, to watch the first ever "Fulbright's Got Talent." For two hours, fellow Fulbrighters held their peers spellbound with virtuoso piano playing, unicycle riding, bachata dancing, and showcasing other talents hidden among the Fulbright cohort. Max Forster, a German grantee headed to UNC Chapel Hill this fall, reflected on his evening at the show. "It is almost an understatement to call those abilities 'talents', given how professionally they were performed," he said, "At the same time, even the most talented person was very approachable. It was generally inspiring to be in such a atmosphere of casual ambitiousness."

As the week went on, the pace of the conference accelerated. Monday began with a talk by Fulbright alumnus Stephen Frost and his colleague, Raafi Alidina of his company, Frost Included. The two work as "diversity consultants," helping businesses create more inclusive workplaces. Their recommendations are often simple nudges –

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anonymizing resumes or facilitating better discussions – but Alidina stressed the big impacts of small changes, especially regarding wording. “Language is the trojan horse through which ideas enter the mind,” he explained. “By changing the way we speak, we change the way we think.” Amelie Rossmailer, a psychologist and German grantee heading to the University of Michigan, loved how Frost and Alidina’s presentation demonstrated the intersection of various fields of study and professions working towards practical solutions to combat modern problems of structural racism and bias.

That evening, everyone piled into buses and headed over to the Universität der Künste (UdK) for the Fulbright Ceremony. Live jazz and a lightning round of presentations of research by Fulbrighters built up to the keynote speaker, Sergio Jaramillo Caro. The former High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia told the story of the four years he spent in negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia working on a peace deal. Caro attributed his success to the four essential elements of negotiating peace: courage, a sense of how and when to move, vision, and strategy. These elements served not only as touchstones for effective negotiation, but also as tools with which to approach challenges, whatever they may be. A spirit of liveliness and ease marked the reception afterward as attendees milled about the UdK eating, drinking, and chatting after an exhilarating day of programming.

Following breakfast on Tuesday morning, the attendees made their way down to the historic Kino International near Alexanderplatz, where the day’s program offered lessons from the past, present, and future. The day began with a talk from Claudia Rusch, in which she reflected on her time growing up in East Berlin and the realities of Stasi



*Enjoying a glass of wine after the “FestAkt” at UdK*



*Listening to Dr. Oliver Schmidt speak: Farewell Party, Frannz Club*



*Dancing the night away at the Frannz Club during the farewell party*

*All photos by Stefan Zeitz*



Fulbrighters show off their talents at the first ever "Fulbright's Got Talent" show; photo: David Ausserhofer

surveillance in daily life. After a coffee break, we heard the West German perspective from Dr. Thomas Bagger, a Fulbright Alumnus who was a grantee at the University of Maryland when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. Carly Lave and Oluwaseun Olayiwola closed the morning session with a transfixing dance titled "Unbound," a deftly arranged show of dance and sound resulting in an arresting performance. A lecture and Q&A with Adam Michnik on the "Future of the European Idea," provided a look into recent Polish history and events as context for the continent's present and future challenges. Echoing the themes of diversity and inclusion, Sawsan Chebli, delegate from Berlin to the Federation, led a discussion on Civil Society and Intercultural Understanding in which she offered her perspective as a daughter of immigrants and shared what structural limitations to inclusion for certain communities currently exist in German society today.

The afternoon gave attendees a chance to participate in walking tours of Berlin, or to catch up on sleep and prepare for the celebrating to be had at the farewell party. Each tour provided a lens for getting to know Berlin through its history, culture, and art. Whether it was a walk around Flughafen Tempelhof, a history lesson of East Berlin, a visit to the Marienfelde Refugee Center Museum, or a tour of Berlin's Street Art, each excursion offered something for everyone. Later that evening, attendees reconvened at the Frannz Club for the farewell party. It was a night of fun and merriment shared between new friends and old, closing the seminar on a festive note.

To conclude in the spirit of Dr. Schmidt's initial challenge, let us revisit courage.

To understand it, one must search beyond its definitions and look, rather, to how and amongst whom it manifests. It takes a great deal of courage for the Fulbrighter of color to frankly shed light on harsher realities beyond the rose-colored glasses of a Fulbright experience; it is difficult for the trailblazer to admit the struggles of actualizing progress, which is why it is necessary to do so. Indeed, facing problems head-on and with conviction is an inclination Fulbrighters have in common: this is what courage asks of us. In a time when the work to realize diversity and inclusion is more critical than ever, this generation of Fulbrighters and alumni courageously and humbly commit to embrace this effort.

**Khadija Ali Amghaiab** is from Nashville, Tennessee. She completed her Fulbright grant as an ETA in Mainz, Rheinland-Pfalz. She's is currently working towards a Masters of Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School (2019-2021).



**Neil Doughty** is an English Teaching Assistant placed in Arnsberg, Nordrhein Westphalia. Before Fulbright, he studied Psychology, Economics, and German at the University of Texas. While in Arnsberg this year, he developed a severe addiction to hearty German breads and therefore plans to stay for another year working as an ETA in Hamburg.





Showing off the Fulbright Spirit with  
US Consul General Meghan Gregonis (front left)

# The Unconference

by Anna Irvine

**Welcome Meeting: October 26–28, 2018**

Based on an innovative concept led by Bernd Riedel and Eugen Litwinow, the 2018 Welcome Meeting took on the form of an “Unconference.” Bernd and Eugen are both Fulbright alumni and co-founders of Ellery Studio, a human-centered strategy and design studio based in Berlin, Germany. After successfully incorporating the Unconference theme as a workshop during the 2017 Welcome Meeting and receiving immense positive feedback, the decision was made to jump in headfirst and structure this year’s conference entirely based on this “un”-concept.

Before testing our creativity with the Unconference, the weekend kicked off with a wine reception on Friday evening: grantees enjoyed snacks and drinks while getting acquainted with one another, catching up with old friends, and speculating what might lie ahead. Meghan Gregonis, US Consul General in Munich and honored guest of the evening, initiated the weekend with a short speech welcoming all of the grantees to Munich.

By Saturday mid-morning the Unconference was in full force! First up on the docket was Dr. Oliver Schmidt, Executive Director of the German-American Fulbright Commission. He spoke about the roots of the Fulbright program, its goals and values, and emphasized that, “we are living in a time when we can’t take anything for granted.” He explained that proximity can breed contempt, and that the Fulbright program was enacted for and still exists today as an attempt to assist in avoiding isolation, to foster engagement amongst one another and across cultures, and to create a community of connected individuals with common interests and goals.

Once Dr. Schmidt concluded his speech, the Unconference sprung into action. Eugen introduced the group to the concept with a short, informative presentation, explaining that the Unconference follows the motto that “an organization should not dictate, but create.”

## The rules of the Unconference were as follows:

1. **Whoever comes are the right people**
2. **Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened**
3. **When it starts is the right time to start**
4. **When it is over, it is over**

In essence: there are no rules! The beauty of the unconference structure was that the participants guided the entire process: anyone who had an idea for a session was invited to the front of the room to quickly pitch their topic. After the pitches were made, we all voted on which sessions we would like to attend, and based on the number of votes, each theme was then assigned a location. In true Fulbright fashion, the sessions were full of intellectual chatter and a vibrant exchanging of ideas. Topics ranged from discussions on race (Let’s Talk about Race) and political debates (Politics and Polarization) to tech-themed initiatives (Space and the Arctic; and Welcoming our Robot Overlords). There were even a few interactive sessions, for example a session to teach basic breathing exercises and yoga techniques (Get Your Yoga On!), and another led by a Fulbrighter hoping to find participants to record short interviews for a video documentary chronicling his Fulbright experience (Can I Record You?). One Fulbright alumna even showed the crowd photos of her research on reindeer during her time in Sweden in the session, “Space Deer.”



The “Get Your Yoga On!” group practicing new yoga techniques



Demonstrating breathing exercises (Get Your Yoga On!)

The participants were particularly moved by the surprise attendance of Linda Biehl, her daughter Molly, and a family friend. They went out of their way to come to our Welcome Meeting to tell the story of Amy Biehl, a Fulbrighter who was killed in post-apartheid South Africa in 1993. They led a session titled “What Happens When You Don’t Come Home,” and shared with us not only the tragedy of Amy’s death, but also the legacy she has left behind. The discussion touched on the concept of forgiveness as well as on how Amy’s life and legacy have had such a positive impact on so many lives, which is also documented in “Amy Biehl’s Last Home: A Bright Life, a Tragic Death, and a Journey of Reconciliation in South Africa.”

After the sessions, we all came together to hear the summaries of what each group discussed: the recaps were much welcomed, since we all wished we could have been able to take part in each and every session. Too much Fulbright creativity, too little time!

Following the recaps, Consul General Gregonis addressed the group again, this time giving us insight into her job and daily routine. Gregonis focused on the diplomatic engagements and visions of the US State Department, emphasizing the concept of the “diplomatic family” and the importance of advocating and embodying a “people to people mentality.” She encouraged us, as Fulbrighters, to continue to help build cultural understanding among groups and to continue to foster cross-cultural dialogue, both integral parts of her role as Consul General. Gregonis’ also shared her goals with us for her time in Germany, which are to:

1. Engage Bavarian students to go to the US;
2. Unite US and Bavarian innovators; and
3. Engage the youth in Bavaria.

After her speech, she graciously opened up the floor to questions in a true unconference fashion, happily answering our queries about everything from her career history to her relationship with the other US Consuls General in Germany (they’re a friendly group, sometimes partaking in common activities, such as the German classes Gregonis took with Frankfurt US Consul General Patricia Lacina).

The conference continued with dinner at the Park Café, a Bavarian restaurant and bar located in a striking building with 1930s architectural style. We enjoyed discussing the events of day with fellow Fulbrighters over beers, Käse-spätzle, and Schnitzel. After dinner, the group headed to Americanos, a club in the heart of Munich, to continue the party: the evening was just getting started!

Several tours – a city tour, Dachau concentration camp, and Nymphenburg Palace Gardens – were offered on Sunday for those who hadn’t already hopped on trains to head back to their hometowns (or who weren’t too exhausted from the excitement on Saturday!)

The Unconference was truly a home run, and throughout the weekend chatter could be heard about the positive impact of such a spontaneous, free-flowing conference format. Many thanks to Ellery Studio for their continued support of the Welcome Meeting (three years and running); to Amerikahaus for hosting us at their event venue; and of course, extra thanks to both General Consul Meghan Gregonis and Dr. Oliver Schmidt for joining us and helping to make the 2018 Welcome Meeting such a success.

After receiving her degree in International Relations from The Ohio State University in 2014, **Anna Irvine** spent time volunteering in Bolivia. Once back in the US she worked as an Office Manager in her Ohio hometown before traveling to Germany on a Fulbright Scholarship to work as an English Teaching Assistant in Rheinfelden, Baden-Württemberg. 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. She is currently completing her Master’s degree at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, while also working part-time at the Steelcase Learning + Innovation Center. Anna is also the editor of the FRANKly.





# And the Fulbright Prize 2018 goes to: Dr. Angela Merkel

Since 1993, the US Fulbright Association has awarded the J. William Fulbright Prize for International Understanding (called the Fulbright Prize) to individuals and groups who have made extraordinary contributions toward bringing people, cultures, or nations to a greater understanding of others. A leading example of this is former South African President, Nelson Mandela, who was awarded the inaugural Fulbright Prize. In addition to Mandela, three other recipients of the Fulbright Prize – Jimmy Carter, Kofi Annan and Martti Ahtisaari – were later named as Nobel Peace Prize laureates.

On January 28, 2019 about 350 guests from around the world and over 100 media representatives participated in the award ceremony. Among the guests were Fulbright alumni and current grantees from the US and Germany, politicians, academics, artists, leaders from business and NGOs, some of them Fulbrighters themselves. It was a great occasion for me to see some of my old Fulbright friends who had come from all over Germany, from Denmark, and some had even made the trek across the Atlantic to Berlin, just to attend this event. The ceremony took place in the AXICA Congress and Convention Center on Pariser Platz, next door to the US Embassy. Ambassador Grenell was also among the guests there to honor Dr. Angela Merkel. Thousands more participated in the live transmission of the award ceremony around the globe, which was broadcast on the Fulbright Association's media channel. Within the US Fulbright Association members hosted viewing parties for Fulbright chapters and communities. And through the hashtag #Fulbright-Prize, Fulbrighters were even able to extend their congratulations to Chancellor Merkel electronically.

It was the first time in the 25 years of the Fulbright Prize existence that the ceremony took place outside of the USA. It was joked later on at the reception that had it been held next door to the venue (at the US Embassy), it would have technically stayed on US territory, continuing the quarter-century streak.

At the beginning of the award ceremony a video was shown in which all Fulbright Prize recipients were listed. From where I sat I could observe Dr. Merkel watch the video with great interest, especially when finding herself at the end of this list. After seeing her name and picture at the end I had the impression she sat-up a bit straighter. You can find this amazing video on the Fulbright.org website:

<https://fulbright.org/programs/prize/>

CNN anchor Christiane Amanpour came from London for the event and gave the laudatio. Amanpour said, "Angela Merkel has championed the promise of reconciliation in a way that distinguishes her as a Fulbright Laureate that has committed to the issues and ideas that keep the peace on our continent, and in the world." Additionally, she told the audience that she had covered Chancellor Merkel from afar and that she could second the Fulbright citation that honors her for her remarkable and compassionate leadership, as well as her strong commitment to mutual understanding, international cooperation, and peace.

Wiltrud Hammelstein with two Fulbright friends



Fulbright Prize Laureate Dr. Angela Merkel surrounded by (f.l.): Dr. Oliver Schmidt, Dr. Jih-Chu Lee, Dr. Manfred Philipp, Dr. Mary Ellen Heian Schmider, and Dr. John Bader



Chancellor Merkel and Christiane Amanpour conversing with Fulbrighters



The Fulbright Prize was presented to Chancellor Merkel by Mary-Ellen Heian Schmider, Fulbright Prize Committee Chair, and former Fulbright Association President, Manfred Philipp: "With this award the Fulbright Association honors Chancellor Merkel for her remarkable, compassionate leadership and her strong commitment to mutual understanding, international cooperation, and peace. The Fulbright Association believes that Chancellor Merkel embodies the best of leadership in times of unrelenting global crises and challenges."

Fulbright alumna Renée Fleming, a world-renowned opera singer who completed her Fulbright in Germany, also sent in her congratulations via a recorded video message, a pleasant surprise considering Chancellor Merkel's well-known passion for opera. Other congratulatory messages were delivered by Oliver Schmidt, Executive Director of the German-American Fulbright Commission, and by Manuel Pauser. Manuel is a German Fulbright alumnus originally from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Chancellor Merkel's home state. Manuel reminded us all in his speech of the importance behind the Fulbright year, emphasizing that the United States is so diverse and complex that one needs to spend adequate time there, exploring not only the big cities but the Heartland as well, in order to truly get to the center of the American soul. All Fulbrighters I know could not agree more. I would also say the same holds true for spending time as a Fulbrighter in Germany.

Chancellor Merkel was notably honored and excited to be among Fulbrighters when accepting her award. In her speech she said, "The Fulbright Prize is the very symbol for how important international friendship is." She thanked the Fulbright Association for its great work and said that she believes "the Fulbright Program decisively contributes to the good relations between Americans and Germans."

After the official award ceremony concluded the participants were invited to a reception. Initially we were told that Chancellor Merkel could not linger, however she seemed to enjoy the event and the Fulbright community so much that she decided to stay for a while. Chancellor Merkel was very much at ease discussing in fluent English, which gave both German and American Fulbrighters the opportunity to engage with her in conversation.

A big thank you to the Fulbright Association for awarding the Fulbright Prize to Angela Merkel and giving us the opportunity to meet "our" Chancellor in Berlin.

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**Wiltrud Hammelstein** spent her Fulbright year 1986/87 in the heartland of America, Illinois, where she studied business and obtained an MBA. After graduating from the University of Cologne in business as well, Wiltrud first worked with a transatlantic focus in private multinationals and later for the Amerika Haus in Cologne. Today she is a senior consultant for data privacy, based in Brussel with multinational customers. Wiltrud is a lifetime member of the US Fulbright Association, a frequent conference-goer for the annual meeting, and a long time member of the German Fulbright Alumni Association e.V. In the latter she served on the board for 10 years, 4 of which were as President.



# Transatlantic Alumni Conference 2019: Rethinking Transatlantic Relations

by Allie Drexler

After years of planning, multiple transatlantic flights, and 4 conference days behind me, my body was physically exhausted by the afternoon of May 4, 2019. However, the circuits in my brain were firing on all cylinders: the Transatlantic Alumni Conference had officially ended, though the ending marked the start of something great. I had the privilege of working with partners at the U.S. State Department, the German Parliament, Cultural Vistas, the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, and the German Embassy in DC to organize a conference to bring together alumni of two transatlantic exchange programs, Internationales Parlements Stipendium (IPS) and the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX). The conference took place in Berlin and was designed to inspire generations of citizen diplomats and to enhance alumni work. The Transatlantic Alumni Conference consisted of panel discussions, networking opportunities, and working groups, each of these components bringing together the expertise of alumni and professionals.

As we progressed through the conference – starting with high-level debates, then practical subject matter discussions, and finally referring to alumni expertise – I became increasingly inspired by the impact of exchange programs and the power of alumni. Just like with this conference, the end of an exchange program symbolizes the beginning of something great, and with over 100 alumni, the potential to start something great was definitely there: The conference gave us the opportunity to lay the foundation, and now we can move forward and build on it.



*Conference participants electrically engaged in discussion*

On the last day of the conference we hosted a panel of alumni-work experts, including leaders from the Fulbright Association and German Fulbright Alumni Association e.V., which was then followed by working groups. During this part of the conference, many of the participants skeptically looked towards the front of the room as I announced that there were no topics and no leaders, just the participants. This format was inspired by my experiences with the Unconference style format used at several Fulbright Alumni e.V. events, including the yearly Welcome Meeting. Slowly but surely, the room eventually filled with chatter, opinions and questions: alumni were empowered to speak out and share through discussing their experiences, goals, and criticisms. Instead of being talked at, they were the ones leading the discussions and determining the topics in various working groups. Witnessing the diverse group successfully come together was a powerful moment that reinforced my dedication to working with alumni groups.



*Transatlantic Alumni Conference participants*

The working groups were a pivotal moment of the conference. Alumni were able to take what they learned about transatlantic relations after listening to amazing remarks by Dagmar Freitag (MdB), Congressman Charlie Dent, former and current State Department leaders, as well as many more inspiring professionals, and apply it to their own lives as alumni, professionals, and citizen diplomats.

Sometimes understanding the importance of alumni work can be difficult, but it is through conferences like this one where I truly see the impact exchange programs can make on a person if they continue to build on the experience (and not to mention the added benefit of a free trip to DC!)

These alumni came to DC as strangers, eager to learn but unsure of what to expect, and left as friends, inspired and electrified. In a survey completed after the conference, 100 percent of participants said they intend to stay engaged in alumni work after attending the conference, even if they never had been involved previously.

Looking back on the conference now, I am positively shocked by the response from alumni: each participant shared a part of themselves with the group while also gaining a part of someone else, and I cannot wait to see what they accomplish with their new knowledge and empowered voices.

If you want to learn more about the Transatlantic Alumni Conference and organizations that contributed to the organization, check out their website: <https://abn-usa.org/conference>



*Author Allie Drexler introducing panel speakers*

**Allie Drexler** completed her Fulbright year working as an English Teaching Assistant at a Gymnasium in Berlin and then continued to teach for an additional school year. Before starting Fulbright, Allie participated in the Internationales Parlaments Stipendium (IPS), during which she collaborated with over 100 other young professionals from around the world in the Bundestag. She continued her work in the Bundestag as a policy advisor for an MdB for almost two years, while also teaching English. Before moving to Berlin, Allie completed her Bachelor's degree in International Affairs at George Washington University in Washington, DC. She is currently working as a program coordinator at the Council on International Educational Exchange in Berlin. This is her second year serving as outreach chair for the Fulbright Alumni Association e.V. She is also vice chair of the American Bundestag Network.



# Wunderbar Together

## Fulbright Germany and the Year of German-American Friendship

Following Senator J. William Fulbright's idea of mutual understanding through exchange, Fulbright Germany was excited to develop five new projects specifically for the Wunderbar Together initiative.

To kick-off Wunderbar Together on October 3, 2018, over 170 Germans and Americans who have lived in Germany (many of them Fulbright grantees and alumni) led fun and interactive activities in US schools. In fact, "Meet-a-German" was so successful that Fulbright Germany was asked to organize the initiative again on October 3, 2019. We are thrilled to report that "Meet-a-German" is now officially an annual event on the Day of German Unity!

The "Trilateral Science Slam" brought together young researchers from the U.S., Germany and Russia to present their original research results and "duke it out" during rapid-fire performances. During the "Educational Experts Seminar" German and American leaders of higher education discussed the impact of digitalization in Boston, New York City and Berlin. In Washington D.C., the "Transatlantic Seminar for Museum Curators and Educators" deepened international understanding, while supporting hands-on

professional development of its German and American participants.

Fulbright Germany's project "On the Road" took three groups of German Fulbright grantees and American Fulbright alumni on different routes across the country. Off the beaten track, they were looking for new perspectives on German traces in the region and the roots of our transatlantic relations. Throughout their journey across the American heartland, the Road Trippers raised larger questions about our democracies and diversity, changing perceptions and stereotypes.

There were plenty of opportunities for exchange between Germans and Americans at the many community events organized by the Road Trippers – be it at a meeting with the mayor and citizens of Germantown in Memphis, a conversation on transatlantic security cooperation with soldiers at the US army base Fort Leonard Wood, or a concert of German country musicians in Austin.

Please read for yourselves how Fulbright alumnus Jacob Comenetz experienced the Roadtrip as citizen ambassador:

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The Year of German-American Friendship electrified the U.S. from October 2018 until November 2019. Wunderbar Together was a comprehensive and collaborative initiative funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, implemented by the Goethe-Institut, and supported by the Federation of German Industries (BDI). With its vast network of partners, Wunderbar Together hosted more than 1,500 programs across the U.S.

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*Erected by the "German Citizens of Wisconsin" and dedicated to the city in June 1908, Milwaukee's Goethe and Schiller statue testifies to the city's rich German heritage.*



# “On the Road” with Fulbright Germany

## Exploring U.S.-German Relations in the American Heartland

by Jacob Comenetz

Turning off the highway at Washington Park in Milwaukee, there they were! The two looming figures on the horizon, their backs facing us, were unmistakably Goethe and Schiller, the dynamic duo of nineteenth century German poetry.

What are Goethe and Schiller doing in Wisconsin’s biggest city, and why were we turning off the highway to visit them? First, the “we”: a group of three German Fulbright scholars currently in the U.S. and three American Fulbright Germany alumni, our team of six had been formed through the Fulbright Germany “On the Road” road trip project, part of the Year of German-American Friendship.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, our Team Violet “From the North” was one of three vans of Fulbright Road Trippers starting in Indianapolis, Austin, and Milwaukee, respectively, traversing the American Heartland on a week-long trip to Fayetteville, AR for the University of Arkansas conference “Building Bridges: The Fulbright Legacy and the Future of International Exchange.”

Our mission: to explore and gain insight into the U.S.-German relationship, yesterday and today, through public events and individual encounters along three routes, each stretching over a thousand miles.

### From Team Violet to Ultraviolet

My journey with Stella, Nicole, Vincent, Megan and Alwin as Team Violet had actually begun nearly two months earlier, when we found out our team members and began the planning process. While Fulbright Germany provided a suggested itinerary, it was up to each group to plan its own route and stops and organize a minimum of four public events along the way.

After five lengthy video conferences and countless hours spent identifying, contacting and coordinating with partners from Davenport, IA to Hermann, MO, Team Violet’s meeting at Milwaukee International



Team Violet’s first stop: visiting Goethe and Schiller in Milwaukee, WI.

Airport felt more like a reunion than a first encounter. The intensity of the planning phase had already proved a significant team-building exercise – one valuable outcome for this pilot project of international educational exchange.

Now, back to Goethe and Schiller in Milwaukee. Finding this imposing statue, a recasting of the 1857 Goethe-Schiller statue in Weimar, Germany, in the city once nicknamed the “German Athens of America,” was at first surprising, but ultimately historically fitting. Milwaukee, along with Cincinnati and St. Louis, comprised the “German immigration triangle” in the nineteenth century, when wave after wave of German immigrants shaped the character of these cities and the country more broadly. Politically, economically, and culturally, we felt the legacy of that influence throughout our journey through the Heartland.

In downtown Milwaukee, a fascinating walking tour of the city’s “German district” led by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee historians and Germanists shed much light on the



indelible German influence – not only in the architecture of buildings like the Blatz brewery, German-English Academy, and City Hall, but in the enduring cultural and political character of institutions like the Grohmann Museum and captivating Turner Hall.

### Turners Everywhere you Turn

The presence of Turner Halls along our route, from Milwaukee to Galena, IL, to Washington, MO, was one of many “rote Fäden,” or common themes, running through our six days on the road. Virtually unknown today, in the mid-nineteenth century the Turners, who combined physical fitness with pro-democratic civic engagement, founded halls across the Midwest. Importantly, the Turners, among other German immigrants, were staunch abolitionists and many gave crucial support to the Union cause during the Civil War. Our brief stop at Abraham Lincoln’s Springfield, IL home on the way from Davenport to St. Louis added depth to this ongoing theme.

Our experience “on the road” beyond Madison showed us many little-known and beautiful aspects of America: through the rolling hills of southwestern Wisconsin to the Great River Road along the flooding Mississippi into Davenport; across the endless expanse of flat-as-a-tin-pan



A toast in Davenport, IA, following a successful “Lange Nacht” event at the German-American Heritage Center & Museum.



Our marvelous guide Dorris Keeven-Franke, a public historian with the Missouri Germans Consortium, took us to the spot in the Village of Dutzow, MO where Gottfried Duden had his farm. Published in 1829, Duden’s book „A Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America” inspired thousands of Germans to emigrate to Missouri.

Illinois farmland, again over the swelled Mississippi to historic St. Charles and St. Louis; up into the Missouri Rhineland via Hermann to Jefferson City; via undulating open country down to the sprawling U.S. Army base Fort Leonard Wood along Route 66; and finally into the stunning Ozarks by Branson and down into lush northwestern Arkansas. By and large, our route – with a hat tip to Google Maps – kept us off the interstates, giving German and American road trippers alike a new sense of connection to the land itself and the many people we met along the way.

After meeting the other Road Trippers and conference attendees in Fayetteville, it soon became clear that each team had had similar experiences in this regard. No matter the route taken, the experience of being on a shared “quest” to explore German-American relations in the Heartland led to special encounters that otherwise would not have occurred. In this way, as pioneers of a new kind of international exchange following in the footsteps of Senator Fulbright, we experienced and expanded the spirit of “Wunderbar Together,” building new bridges of friendship within countries, between counties, and across generations.

This article was first published on the WunderbarTogether Blog on May 31, 2019.

Follow [\(a\)fulbrightgermany](#) on Instagram and Facebook to learn more about their projects for the Year of German-American Friendship and to stay informed



**Jacob Comenetz** focuses on strategic communications supporting transatlantic cultural and educational relations. As Senior Cultural Affairs Officer at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Washington, his portfolio includes exchange programs, cultural events, promotion of the German language, cultural heritage and restitution of cultural property, and many other topics. Previously, Jacob worked in the media and public affairs landscapes of Berlin and Washington in various roles, including Contributing Writer for the Washington Diplomat, News Editor at the German Press Agency dpa, and as a Fulbright Journalism Fellow in Berlin during 2008-09. A former International Parliamentary Scholar of the German Bundestag, Jacob holds an M.A. in German and European Studies from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and a B.A. in Philosophy from Colorado College.



# New Members

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**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!**

Christopher Norman	Heidelberg
Julia Theilen	Stuttgart
Adrian Ziegler	Aachen
Uta Kanefend	Fürth
Sofia Eleftheriadi-Zacharaki	Aachen
Lucas Koczian	Berlin
Lara Kröncke	Hamburg
Frieder Neunhoeffler	Kirchentellinsfurt
Sabrina Herzig	Ditzingen
Hendrik Stein	Berlin
Aylin Karabulut	Düsseldorf
Fabian Groß	Darmstadt
Alexandra Knapheide	Freiburg
Chantal Lorenz	München
Carlotta Sophie Stintzing	Stuttgart
Torben Ritter	Engelskirchen
Timona Ghosh	München
Leonard Schmidt	Hannover
Matthias Mayer	Augsburg
Antonia Kanold	Konstanz
Tobias Schröder	Heidelberg
Tina Kaffl	Bruckmuehl
Alessandro Marseglia	Salach
Alexander F. Groß	Hannover
Lea Sophie Zeiler	Tübingen
Helena Müller	Heidelberg
Saskia Haßkamp	Einbeck
Thore Zeuhe	Glinde
Jens Münchow	Riesweiler
Martin Dürr	Frankfurt
Manuel Mielke	Echterdingen
Robin Wolter	Bremen
Miloud Elidrissi	Kelsterbach
Lydia Radosch	Lüneburg
Konrad Ringleb	Taunusstein
Niklas Strohe	Augsburg
Aaron Pfennig	Schwerte
Marika Hellmund	Hamburg
Pauline Radtke	Postbauer-Heng
Maurice Hauß	München
Mila Gao	Traunstein
Ramona Mayer	Freiburg im Breisgau
Leon Marenbach	Berlin
Sarah Sobotta	Preez

Alexander Rose	Stuttgart
Jonas Vitt	Wolzbachtal
Lennart Blatt	Coburg
Till Trouvain	Friedrichsdorf
Jule Hulsman	Essen
Antonia vom Dahl	Hamburg
Verena Schnur	Illingen
Julia Kramer	Giessen
Elisabeth Jung	München
Philipp Fritzsche	Hamburg
Celina Stolz	Kassel
Ariana Wendt	Mannheim
Katharina Natter	Konstanz
Anna Ledermann	Kürnach
Barbara Kirchgäßner	Eichstätt
Daniel Reichelt	Göttingen
Benedikt Bohlen	Bad Seegeberg
Henning Richter	Münster
Marc Hary	Bexbach
Insa Schaffernak	Freiburg
Julia Hein	Velpke
Ann-Cathrin Rohrweber	Hamburg
Felix Schwock	Ilmenau
Moritz Kuder	Bremen
Yunus-Emre Gündogdu	Berlin
Sarah Fengler	Frankfurt
Hanan Al Ghawi	Dortmund
Kilian Willems	Trier
Michael Biehler	Hirschau
Ricardo Römhild	Münster
André Weigel	Würzburg
Noah Peeters	Geesthacht
Alexander Clausen	Berlin
Max Bornhorst	Elsten
Katharina Gottuk	Heidenheim a.d. Brenz
Lara Henk	Buchen
Johannes Neckel	Karlsruhe
Pia Müller	Freiberg a.N.
Lea Wassermann	Weil am Rhein
Frederik Dangel	Dielheim
Kiril Denisov	Meddesheim
Hila Safi	Magdeburg
Amela Basagie	Bielefeld
Recep Ceviz	Karlsruhe

## New Members

Celina Mohamed	Berlin
Aya Mansari	Bielefeld
Joshua Körper	Leingarten
Hicham Rhannam	Boppard
Matteo Stockmann	Eftersheim
Sara Cardoso de Oliveira	Groß-Umstadt
Isabelle Rogat	Hamburg
Forough Mosavi Lar	Lübeck
Katharina Fromer	Ratingen
Julian Schröder	Marienheide
Theresa Dehen	Müden
Johanna Epperlein	Delitzsch
Mona El-Ghadouini	Stuttgart
Berfin Ömrüm Turan	Heidelberg
Anastasia Torno	Nagold
Sabrina Schieder	Plößberg
Lena Sauermann	Aachen
Felix Müller	München
Tim Schröder	Kirschwalsede
Marcel-Simon Altinkum	Hennef (Sieg)
Vivian Kretzschmar	Eilenburg
Lea Krause	Verl
Jessica Hupka	Mannheim
Inga Steinbach	Marburg
Fabienne Ruppen	Offenbach
Tim Alpers	Hagenburg
Ayca Akcakoca	Netphen
Viorel Borgovan	Berlin
Georg Peter	Würzburg
Anne Scheffels	Mainz

## 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

Eberhard Plattfaut	15. December 2018
Brigitte Haar	01. March 2019



*Dancing like nobody's watching; photo: Wiltrud Hammelstein*



*Fulbright alumni with Fiona Evans (US Consul General) and Daniel Wagner (Fulbright Commission); photo: Allie Drexler*



*Dancing in the spotlight; photo: Wiltrud Hammelstein*



*Major Thomas Geisel and Consul General Fiona Evans; photo: Wiltrud Hammelstein*

# What has ten letters and is très chic?

# Winterball? Düsseldorf?

## The answer is – of course – both!

by Jana Frey

Düsseldorf: a city that has long since established the reputation of being Germany's fashion capital. And how could you possibly make Germany's fanciest city even fancier? That's right: you have the Fulbright Alumni Association come to town to throw their annual Winterball!

The event kicked off on Friday, February 15, 2019, and around 6pm about 60 Fulbrighters met at Düsseldorf's Town Hall for a reception with the city's mayor and Fulbright Alum, Thomas Geisel. After a brief moment of disbelief upon the realization that the guests had not yet tried the good old Altbier in Düsseldorf fashion, the mayor continued his speech, accentuating the special meaning that the transatlantic relationship and especially the Fulbright program hold for all of us. After Thomas Geisel's very inviting address, it was clear that the Winterball had definitely found the perfect location for its 2019 gathering. The reception was followed by a luscious meal in a restaurant in Düsseldorf's Old Town, where Fulbrighters from all stages of life came together to conclude the first evening of the Winterball weekend (of course with some more Altbier, as well as some other local delicacies) – Himmel un Ääd anyone?

The main event day was, as always, Saturday. And as always, the fun first had to be earned through hard work in the form of the annual Alumni General Meeting, which took place this year at the local Volkshochschule. After a couple hours of lively discussion, decisions were made pertaining to new board elections and many other important issues. In true Fulbright fashion, the General Meeting was a great opportunity to throw around ideas of how to maintain the dialogue among the many different and regionally dispersed Fulbright alumni. A main new idea came in the form of a proposal for thematic groups in addition to the regional chapters: we are looking forward to the many new topics we Fulbrighters will tackle through this initiative!

After long hours of talking, long hours of drinking coffee, and long hours of sitting down we truly deserved to kick off our tennis shoes, to throw ourselves into our formal wardrobe, and to fully indulge in the fanciness that can only be described as the Fulbright Alumni Winterball, which was hosted at the Hilton Hotel in Düsseldorf. The evening started off with a delicious beverage before the doors finally opened to let us into the Rheinlandsaal for dinner and dancing!

Once everyone was seated, we were welcomed by the Fulbright Alumni Board including several special guests. Mayor Thomas Geisel, as well as the US Consul General in Düs-

seldorf, Fiona Evans, were both there to spend the evening with about 250 Fulbrighters. Their uplifting speeches were rounded off by a fascinating musical clarinet performance followed by the announcement of this year's Mulert Award winner: the London Royals Hockey Club, represented by Dr. Heidrun Bien, who spoke of the importance of supportive LGBTQ+ environments in sports.

A Winterball isn't a true Winterball without a buffet to dig into, giving the term Winterball a whole new meaning. After eating about every kind of food imaginable we could only roll out on the ballroom dance floor. But roll we did, starting off with a Viennese roll, I mean waltz! Elegantly the Fulbrighters spun around – quite unbelievably so, given the amounts of food previously consumed – to eventually adjust their dancing techniques to the DJ's repertoire covering everything from music fit for ballroom dancing to the best from the sixties and seventies, as well as some funky remixes that truly gave everyone the chance to demonstrate their dancing skills.

After a long and energetic night, a fair number of Fulbrighters were up "early" again to meet for brunch and to share their impressions of the Winterball with one another. Some Fulbrighters still found enough strength in them to go on one of several guided tours offered in the city. The rest said their goodbyes in the heart of fancy Düsseldorf after a weekend full of meeting old and new faces with tons of fun that brought together what was, let's be honest, kind of inevitable – Düsseldorf and the Winterball – a match truly made in heaven.

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**Jana Frey** has a BA in History and English from the University of the Saarland and an MA in Global History from Heidelberg University, and attended the University of Oregon on a Fulbright scholarship to study history. Since then she has continued to find opportunities to spend time abroad, such as interning at the German Historical Institute in London and working at a hostel in Dublin. She is currently a project assistant for Ph.D. scholarships for candidates as well as for general research grants and academic projects at the Gerda Henkel Foundation in Germany. Jana also occasionally works as a freelance editor and translator for a publishing house, and is a Judo coach for kids in her free time.





# FAMILY WEEKEND 2019

by Franz-Josef Lörch

As a newcomer to the 19th legendary Fulbright Family Weekend, I am very excited to share my personal experience with readers of The FRANKly. The event took place from May 30th to June 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Natur- & Familienoase Königstein. It is organized and hosted by Elke and her husband Falk, who represent the Dresden Fulbright Alumni Regional Chapter. After having successfully missed all of the previous eighteen Fulbright family weekends that took place since 2001, I couldn't resist sharing this year's invitation with my family. The mere prospect of paddling on the river Elbe had enough charm to convince my two teenage sons to join in, so we positively responded to Elke's invitation and confirmed our attendance.

The journey to Königstein, especially the part alongside the Elbe River, offers impressive views at first sight. We arrived on Thursday afternoon, checked-in, and immediately explored the facilities and surroundings of our accommodation. Clear highlights for us were the riverside trampoline and table tennis facilities, as well as the magnificent views of the river itself. While we stayed back and enjoyed these facilities, a group of ambitious hikers had already reached the top of the near-by Lilienstein – the symbol of the National Park Saxon Switzerland.

In the evening, the Fulbright group grew larger and larger and after dinner we introduced ourselves to each other: We soon got caught up in endless conversations about everything and anything. Each minute it became clearer to me that a diverse group of people from different places, with varying backgrounds had gathered, united together by the common Fulbright spirit.

The following day was packed with excitement: Hiking, paddling and a concert were just some of the highlights. Right after breakfast the group, consisting of about 30 Fulbright Alumni, their families, and Amelie the dog, first travelled to Schmilka to hike up the Zirkelstein, a hill that sits 385 meters above sea level in Saxon Switzerland. Despite its relatively small size, this "Table Mountain" is one of the most distinctive rock formations of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains, primarily due to its unique shape and characteristics. After the descent from the mountain, we went straight back to the shore of the river where our paddle boat tour operator had prepared three boats for a paddling trip back to Königstein. This 12-kilometer long tour started right below the magnificent Schrammstein scenery, went past the spa town of Bad Schandau, and finally back to Königstein, where we rewarded ourselves at the local



Repping the Fulbright Spirit!



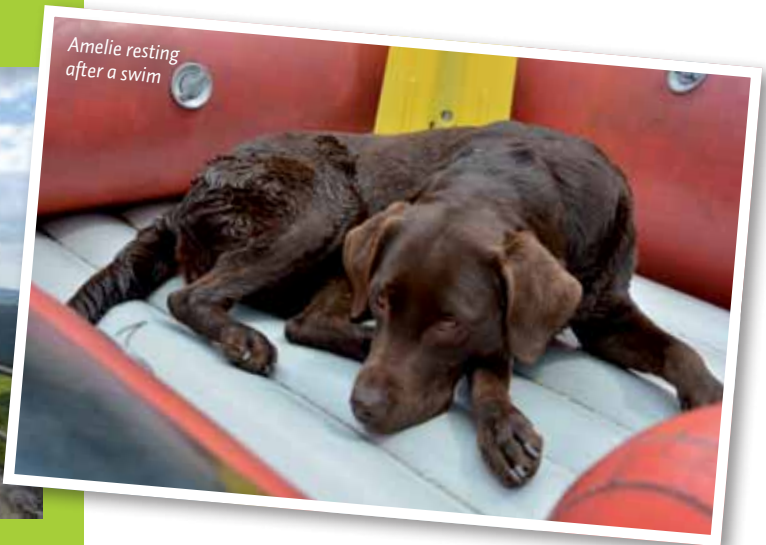
Group photo during our hike in the Saxon Switzerland National Park



Mapping out the way before the group hike



The view while resting on a beautiful restaurant terrace next to the Elbe



Amelie resting after a swim

ice cream parlor. Thanks to the outstanding organizational talent of Elke and Falk, we had the option to attend an American folk-rock gig in the evening – a Tribute to Simon and Garfunkel at the famous Felsenbühne in Rathen. By the way, did you know that Simon and Garfunkel used to call themselves “Tom and Jerry” in the early days? No kidding! After the concert my fifteen-year-old son added their 1965 hit “The Sound of Silence” to his personal play list.

Saturday, June 2, was world Children’s Day: Elke celebrated by surprising the kids in the group with neatly packed sweets. After breakfast, we took the train to the city of Wehlen. Our hike led us through forests, canyons, and the precious Amselwasserfall waterfall before taking us back to the nearby Felsenbühne Rathen again. There, part of the group opted to attend the “Snow-White and Rose-Red” show, while the other part rested on a beautiful restaurant terrace next to the Elbe, enjoying ice cream and drinks. We then made our way back to the Oase in Königstein, where the Fulbright family gathered to celebrate the last evening of this year’s gathering. The youngsters played volleyball while the remainder of us continued to revel in deep conversation until late in the night.

Undoubtedly, time passed quickly, and after Sunday’s breakfast it was time to say our farewells. A big thank you to the organizers Elke and Falk who both, with a tremendous amount of engagement and devotion, enabled all of us to experience such an outstanding 2019 Fulbright Family Weekend. Our children have already asked me to sign up again next year. We’re looking forward to seeing you there!

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As a Fulbright scholar, **Franz-Josef Lörch** had the honor of earning his Master in International Management at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (1998/1999) in California. Since then, he has devoted his professional career to the investment management industry. He and his wife Charo have two teenage sons.

# Regional Chapter Berlin

## Stammtisch at the Eckkneipe and 4<sup>th</sup> of July BBQ on the Airfield

by Felix Wehinger

The goal of the monthly Berlin regional chapter Stammtisch is to introduce odd and curious places to our alumni and current Fulbright grantees. Every month we hunt for new bars, Kneipen, and cafés in order to better understand some of the phenomena the metropolis of Berlin has to offer.

One of these odd places, for example, is the Rheingauer Weinbrunnen at Rüdesheimerplatz, a square – off the beaten tracks of busy and vibrant Berlin – that hosts vineyards with their amazing Rieslings from Rheingrau during the summertime. Apparently the square even became famous last year after the New York Times ranked it as one of the best squares and neighborhoods in Europe. On other occasions we take the regional chapter to traditional Eckkneipen in the old working class neighborhoods of Berlin or enjoy cold drinks at a beer garden near the Schrebergärten. With each new place we go, we aim to show our American chapter members what German daily life looks like and how it can vary.

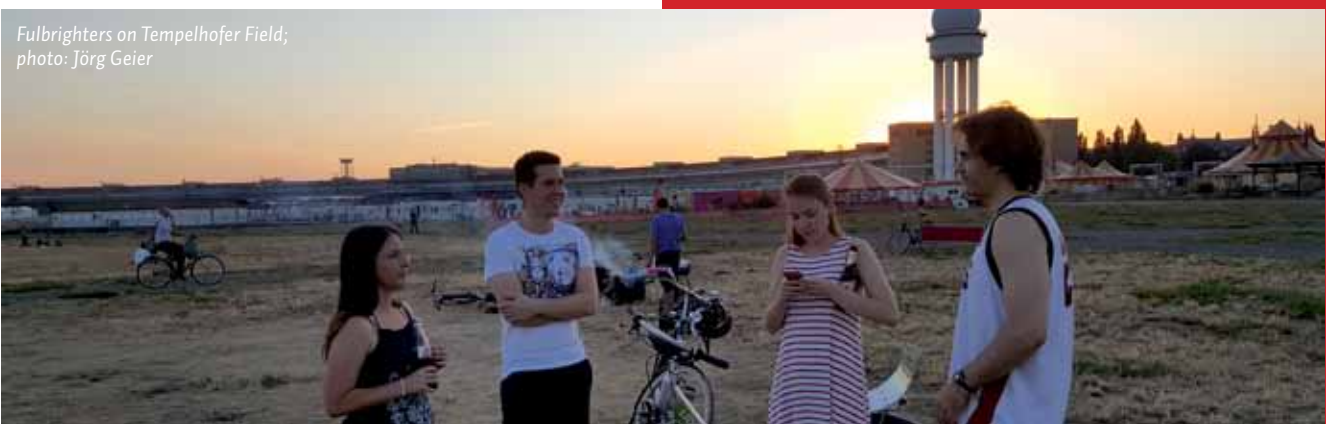


4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks;  
photo: Felix Wehinger

In addition to our monthly Stammtisch we annually celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July with a BBQ party on the Tempelhofer Airfield, which was the major location for the Berlin Airlift (dt. Berliner Luftbrücke), and therefore represents the long transatlantic relationship between Germany and the United States, making it the perfect location for this specific holiday. Furthermore, the United States Embassy has its 4<sup>th</sup> of July Party on the airfield as well, which allows the Regional Chapter to enjoy the amazing firework show put on by the embassy.

We welcome all Fulbright Alumni and current Fulbright grantees to join our events and Stammtische!

Fulbrighters on Tempelhofer Field;  
photo: Jörg Geier



# Regional Chapter Mannheim-Heidelberg

## Greetings from Mannheim-Heidelberg!

by Benjamin Pflieger

The regional chapter Mannheim-Heidelberg is located in the Metropolitan Region Rhine-Neckar. With its global operating corporations, such as SAP, BASF and numerous mid-sized companies, it belongs to Europe's driving economic forces. Our region is also home to two internationally renowned, top-ranked universities. Both institutions attract international students and researchers from top international institutions.

Another exciting year passed for the regional chapter Mannheim-Heidelberg. The traditional Thanksgiving dinner is our chapter's highlight. We usually celebrate Thanksgiving in a restaurant that used to be a church: the unique setting adds a special touch to such an authentic US-American holiday. Additionally, we were honored to co-host a "Stammtisch" together with the German Fulbright Commission in spring 2019 for the first time this year. Another special occasion was attending a discussion on "Social Consensus and Democracy – Transatlantic Perspectives." This was part of the Deutscher Stiftungs Tag of the Association of German Foundations, which took place in Mannheim this year, providing the perfect opportunity to attend an invitation from the German Fulbright Commission. We also welcomed the guest speaker, Prof. Dr. Robert Bartlett from the University of Vermont, to join our Stammtisch! Prof. Bartlett has received numerous Fulbright grants and currently teaches as a Fulbright visiting professor at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Austria.

If you have a chance to join one of our activities, please stop and say hi. For more information please send an email to [rc.mannheim-heidelberg@fulbright-alumni.de](mailto:rc.mannheim-heidelberg@fulbright-alumni.de) or visit the calendar on [fulbright-alumni.de](https://fulbright-alumni.de)



*Stammtisch in June, coordinated with the Fulbright Commission; photo: Benjamin Pflieger*



*April Stammtisch meeting*



*Happy Thanksgiving from the Mannheim-Heidelberg Group!*

# Regional Chapter Cologne-Bonn



Waiting for Obama in front of the LANXESS Arena;  
photo: Viola Ackfeld



Obama in Cologne; photo: Isabel Wasgindt

## The Place to Be

by Viola Ackerfeld

Within the last year, Cologne was truly the place to be when it comes to experiencing American art and spirit. On April 4, 2019, Barack Obama, 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America, visited Cologne to speak at the World Leadership Summit about his visions for the global future: And of course, the Cologne-Bonn Regional Fulbright Alumni Chapter did not want to miss the opportunity to listen to such an inspiring speaker, not to mention one of the most influential Americans of the past decade. Even better, with the help of our friends from the Freundeskreis Köln-Indianapolis, we even managed to get free tickets for this extraordinary event.

Another great experience was the visit to the exhibition "Es war einmal in Amerika" in the Walraff-Richartz-Museum for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of US-American art. We organized a guided tour there for Fulbrighters, as well as other interested people, to learn more about the development and evolution of American art over time.

In addition to these cultural events, we celebrated Thanksgiving with bowling and a traditional turkey dinner, also organized by our friends from the Freundeskreis Köln-Indianapolis. On top of that, we visited the Christmas market in Bonn together to treat ourselves – this time not with American but with German treats like mulled wine and eggnog.



Guided tour at the Walraff-Richartz-Museum Cologne; photo: Susanne Döring

The Cologne-Bonn chapter does not only benefit from the friendship with the Freundeskreis Köln-Indianapolis but also from events at the Amerikahaus NRW e.V., which supports, for example, performances of American musicians in our region and vice versa. This year, we had the chance to listen to a guitar performance by Lucian Plessner in the Beethoven Haus in Bonn to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the star composer Leonard Bernstein.

In order to make events convenient for Fulbrighters both from Bonn and Cologne, we try to iterate our events to be held in both cities. If you want to get connected to our chapter, please contact Ulrich Götz or me!

Christmas market in Bonn; photo: Isabel Wasgindt





An evening in the park;  
photo: Knut Mittwollen

# Regional Chapter Frankfurt

## Im Herzen von Europa liegt mein Frankfurt am Main

by Martin Kohler

Attending our monthly Stammtisch usually means embarking on a culinary journey: Throughout this past year our journey has taken us to gastronomic destinations from Scandinavia, Mexico, Italy and India!

In addition to exploring the local restaurant scene, it is always a pleasure to enjoy the hospitality of some of the regional chapter members. We celebrated 4<sup>th</sup> of July at Casa Mittwollen, got together for our traditional wine tasting at Cem's downtown studio, and enjoyed pre-dinner aperitif/ predrinking at Martin's place.

With all of this wining and dining it's good to also occasionally get involved in sports and other cultural activities. A hike in the Spessart for instance, canoeing on the river Lahn, enjoying a music festival in one of Frankfurt's many parks, or going to the movies: all excursions we embarked on as a Regional Chapter this year.

Would you like to be part of the group? Just send an email to [rc.frankfurt \(a\) fulbright-alumni.de](mailto:rc.frankfurt@fulbright-alumni.de) to find out about upcoming events and come on by!

\* The title is based on song lyrics from *Im Herzen von Europa* by Eintracht Frankfurt



4<sup>th</sup> of July BBQ;  
photo: Knut Mittwollen



Hiking in the woods;  
photo: Hans-Ulrich Bauer

# Regional Chapter Munich

## Celebrating All Year Long

by Barbara Weiten

American holidays are always a great opportunity for German alumni and American grantees to celebrate together: for our “host” regional chapter to provide a home away from home for our American guests and for the German alumni to relive memories of their US exchange year.

For the traditional November Thanksgiving celebration, about 50 German and American Fulbrighters enjoyed turkey and stuffing, cornbread, mashed potatoes, and apple pie as well as good company and great conversations. Fun fact: Did you know that turkeys have no external ears, but great hearing? And that they have a poor sense of smell, but an excellent sense of taste, along with an extremely wide field of vision (ca. 270 degrees)? Beyond enjoying the turkey (as well as the vegetarian options), it was our pleasure to welcome Stephen Ibelli, Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Consulate General Munich, and his family as our special guests. After brief celebratory remarks and some Q&A with the audience, he also shared his perspective on representing the United States in Germany in controversial political times.

To get all of us into the Christmas spirit, we visited the traditional Christmas market on the island Fraueninsel in Chiemsee. In a truly picturesque environment with more than 90 booths offering arts and crafts, hot wine punch, fish specialties, and much more. Some of us decided to recreate our childhood memories while taking a ride on the traditional merry go-around and all of us enjoyed a spectacular sunset over the lake. For those who could not make it to the Fraueninsel but still wanted to get into the Christmas mood with other Fulbrighters, we also met for a Secret Santa gift exchange during our December monthly meeting.

And as another highlight of the Fulbright year, we celebrated Independence Day with an outdoor BBQ potluck, graciously hosted by Andreas, with the weather cooperating and delighting us with a beautiful and warm summer evening.

Strolling along the Donaudurchbruch towards Befreiungshalle



Resting after a day's hike at Walhalla



Meet the usual suspects at the 4<sup>th</sup>-of-July BBQ



Sunset at the shores of Fraueninsel, Chiemsee



Sunny faces at the top of Sonnenspitz



Danielle Cravens welcoming the guests



The Hirschgarten Stadel, all set for Thanksgiving Dinner

## Culture and the Outdoors

Beyond our regular monthly meetings, for which we try a different restaurant or beer garden throughout Munich every month, we also come together for cultural activities or to enjoy the outdoors. This past summer, for instance, we attended an outdoor performance of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* in the atrium of the Glyptothek, a museum in classical Italian-Greek design. In February, we learned more about Japanese culture when attending an exhibition on the history of the Samurai warriors at the Kunsthalle Munich. And in early spring we enjoyed a private tour through the exhibition, “In the eye of the beholder,” showcasing the work of the German illustrator, graphic designer, and children’s books author Christoph Niemann, who can look back on living more than 10 years in New York City and whose work has appeared on the cover of, among others, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times Magazine*.

We also combined history with the outdoors in a cultural walking tour along the Danube, visiting the Benedict monastery Weltenburg Abbey (the eldest monastery in Bavaria), the Hall of Liberation (“Befreiungshalle”) commemorating the victory against Napoleon in the “Befreiungskriege” of 1813-15, and the Walhalla, the German Hall of Fame honoring distinguished people from German history, including Martin Luther, Albert Einstein, and Konrad Adenauer.

In May, we displayed our sporting talents at a large indoor/outdoor-climbing center in the east of Munich, a more than 1600 m<sup>2</sup> “playground” for kids and adults. In July, we successfully hiked the Sonnenspitz (Sun Peak) in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps and were rewarded with a fantastic panorama view of Lake Kochel below. We also met for a relaxing summer bike tour to cycle through the eastern outskirts of the Munich countryside, which we concluded by rewarding ourselves with delicious cake at the locally famous “Kuchenbäcker” (pastry chef).

All photos: Andreas Schoberth

# Regional Chapter Hamburg

## Moin aus Hamburg

by David Patrician

This past year has been a relaxing one for our chapter. After hosting several Fulbright Welcome Meetings and a Winterball, the Hamburg Chapter slowed down the pace a little this year and enjoyed a few Stammtisches and local events.

In November the Parlamentarische Patenschafts-Programm (PPP – also known as the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange, CBYX) invited us to join them for a Thanksgiving Dinner. Over 30 people enjoyed a delicious meal, including a superb pumpkin pie, while also making new friends. This was our second event with the PPP and we plan on doing another event together soon.

In December a few of us met up for our annual Glühwein at the Weihnachtsmarkt. Later in January a group of us traveled to Berlin to watch Chancellor Angela Merkel receive the William Fulbright Prize for Peace and Understanding. The prize recognizes and rewards outstanding contributions toward bringing people, cultures, and nations to greater understanding of others. It was a very special Fulbright evening for everyone.



Several of our Fulbrighters also attended this year's Winterball in Düsseldorf. Everyone had a fantastic weekend and came home happy, but exhausted. It was great having the mayor of Düsseldorf, Thomas Geisel, greet the attendees and share some of his experiences as a Fulbright exchange student in the US...another great Fulbright story! We know how much time, energy, and work goes into planning a Winterball and we want to thank Ines Winkler and her team for a fantastic weekend!

Finally, a few weeks ago some Fulbrighters were invited to attend the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July BBQ at the US Consulate. It was a bittersweet day: The party was fantastic, with over 400 people enjoying live music, burgers and baseball; however, it was also the farewell party for US Consul General Rick Yoneoka. Rick has been a dear friend and supporter of the Fulbright Hamburg regional chapter, and we are sorry to see him go. We wish him and his family all the best for their next posting back in Washington.



What a crowd! Celebrating Thanksgiving together with the PPP Group



Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July from your Hamburg Regional Chapter!

All photos: David Patrician

# Regional Chapter Franken



Enjoying the Thanksgiving celebration

## Future Bound

by Desiree Doyle

The Franconian Regional Chapter is very small, comprising of approximately forty members, which means that the parties feel like very important and exclusive events! In hopes of expanding our membership, this year we focused on our new and young members. The invitations to Thanksgiving and July 4<sup>th</sup> were intended to welcome new group members and encourage them to get involved in our Fulbright family.

On July 13<sup>th</sup> we celebrated our traditional Independence BBQ, one of the main events of the year for our group. It was a nice afternoon, with the party kicking off at about 6 p.m. As an appetizer we had a glass of sparkling wine (cheers!). The food selection was impressive: baguettes, mixed salad, corn, burgers, sausages, mussels, cheese, and even some home-made dips were ready to be devoured. We even had a sweet red wine to go with it all. There was also non-alcoholic beer for those who had to drive. But the very best was still waiting for us at the end of the meal: triple chocolate ice cream with a mixture of fresh fruit, topped off with coffee and pear brandy. What else could have made this day more perfect!?

Our Thanksgiving Dinner this year will be the next upcoming major event, and we're looking forward to seeing you there. To stay informed on events and other updates, please contact our regional chapter via [rc.franken \(a\)fulbright-alumni.de](mailto:rc.franken(a)fulbright-alumni.de)

This year's recipient of the Jürgen Mulert Award on Mutual Understanding is Heidrun Bien for her work with

# The London Royals Hockey Club



The London Royals Hockey Club is the UK's first open and largest Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Hockey Club (Field Hockey that is!). We offer everyone the chance to be themselves in a safe and supportive place, on and off the pitch. The club is exceptionally international and culturally diverse, organizes frequent social events, national and international tours, and supports LGBTQ+ initiatives such as Pride events, the Eurogames, Gaygames, Pink Hockey, and Out for Sports. It aims to provide a safe and accepting space to all, independent of sporting ability, with the aim of increasing visibility, accessibility, and participation.

So gay! Who has NOT heard homophobic remarks used as an insult in sports? From bullying in school to coming across anti-LGBT language at the pub, on social media, and on or off the pitch, the truth is even today, and even in Western Europe, many lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people still have negative experiences involving sports. Because of this, they can feel that they are not welcome and that sports are not a safe place for them to be.

In 2005, my now wife, Karen, started the London Royals Hockey club together with a friend. They wanted to create a community and inclusive space where people from different backgrounds could come together and find friends, fun, and support in their everyday lives. A club open to ALL, not just the LGBT community, and welcoming of all abilities, regardless of background.

Today, the London Royals Hockey Club is a community of over 350 players who are active on a monthly basis, including many more who have since moved away from London,

who are all over the world, and still feel like part of the family and occasionally join for tours or events.

Some have even started their own LGBT-friendly clubs, including the Perth Pythons in Australia and the Black Sticks in New Zealand; teams we now play in tournaments. Our club particularly welcomes complete beginners (newbies) and we also have a hardship fund in place so that anyone who wants to play is able to. We want to provide a supportive environment and inspire confidence, creating a place where everyone feels welcome.

At the very core of the club are mixed games and socials. Being inclusive means we are also exceptionally diverse in terms of age (from 21 to currently 65) and ethnicity. Ironically, for about the first 10 years, my wife Karen was the only London-born Londoner in the London Royals; our membership extends all around the world, from South Africa, Australia, the US, Canada, Argentina, Italy, South Korea, and the Netherlands, and there are also many, many Germans! We even have a German of the year award – I am not kidding – though I have not won it yet: life goals!

An older player in his late 50's joined the club and told us that he never thought that in his lifetime he would be involved in an openly LGBT club. He had played hockey for most of his life while having to hide who he was from his teammates. Another similar example is that of an ex-army officer who had spent many years hiding his sexuality, ashamed and scared that anyone would find out he was gay, which affected his mental and physical health. He explained how joining the London Royals helped him accept



London Royals on route to Gaygames 2018 Paris; photo: Tommy Mancktelow

who he was and to feel better overall. This club is a family for many: for those that are rejected, for those that feel like they don't fit, for those who just want to play sports and make friends.

As a club we try to not only be a safe and welcoming place for individuals who join US but also to do what we can to increase visibility and participation with the aim of making sports everyone's game. Last year, nearly a hundred of us participated in the Gaygames in Paris, an event that takes place every 4 years with close to 10.000 athletes - LGBT and straight - and we march at various Pride events, to name but a few of our involvements. On June 29, we hosted our own 2<sup>nd</sup> Pride cup, an inclusive 1-day tournament that attracts mainstream UK and some European teams. There are 5 teams playing in the regular league, and in the past 3 years our teams have had 3 Nominations for the England Hockey Awards, one for club of the year, and one for both men's and women's team of the year. In my own women's first team we are often told by opponents that despite having beat them, we were the nicest team they have played against. We do want to win, but we like to do so nicely.

Mutual understanding is by no means something that just happens or can be achieved and ticked off the "to-do" list. We are a social species but one prone to ingroup/outgroup thinking. From biases against foreigners, or any minority really, we know that the harshest attitudes and most negative stereotypes tend to be expressed by those who have very little to no actual contact with individuals of the group they have such opinions about.

Toxic outgroup thinking that is so easily instrumentalized by those who aim to divide and raise themselves above others has a powerful antidote in human-to-human interaction and in shared experiences.

Twenty years ago I was a lucky recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship, and though that in itself was a fantastic opportunity,

I am most grateful for what that was the beginning of: being a Fulbright Alumni and enabling me to not only meet incredible people who believe in the values of fostering peace through understanding, but who also roll up their sleeves to help make it happen. As a Fulbrighter and a London Royals Hockey player I am incredibly proud to receive this award on behalf of the London Royals Hockey club. Thank you!!



**Dr. Heidrun Bien** is a German Fulbright Alumni from the University of Kansas (1998/99). A psychologist by training, she currently works as a Senior Lecturer and Program Director at University of London and as a private coach. She is a proud member of the London Royals Hockey Club and player in its 1<sup>st</sup> women's team.

## Mulert Award 2020 – Call for Nominations

Since 2010, the German Fulbright Alumni Association has granted 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 2020 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.

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### 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 2020, in Düsseldorf
- project summary and author biography in the 2020 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

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The Call for Nominations will be accessible online until Sunday, **November 24, 2019**.

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

### Contact:

Felix Wehinger  
**[mulert.award\(a\)fulbright-alumni.de](mailto:mulert.award(a)fulbright-alumni.de)**

Fulbright's diversity initiative acknowledges and embraces the responsibility of committing ourselves to a truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive Fulbright future.



Fulbright Germany has supported more than 46,000 German and U.S. grantees, since 1952.

# THANK YOU ALUMNI!

## WE NEED YOU

Our Fulbright heroes and stars: English Teaching Assistant's (ETA's), Foreign Language Teaching Assistant's (FLTA's), scholars, students, journalists, administrators, grantees in the long and short-term programs. This includes:

60 Nobel-Prize winners

37 heads of state and government, and more than 14 Fulbrighters in the fine arts.



To tap into the creative potential of our alumni an annual alumni video report will soon be available on social media and our website.

You are part of an international community of 380.000 Fulbright alumni!



## YOU ELECTRIFY US

The German Alumni Association and the Association of Friends and Sponsors of the German-American Fulbright Program (VFF) are funding additional grants for the Diversity Initiative. We invite Fulbrighters and friends to join and donate to this worthwhile cause.

All Fulbrighters are ambassadors dedicated to improving intercultural understanding.



Since January 2018, Fulbright Germany's network developer, Daniel H. Wagner, has been working toward setting up an innovative alumni service.



We encourage Fulbrighters to join the German Fulbright Alumni Association.



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