



NEWS

SAVE THE DATE: November 8, 2024

Russians in exile: Aron Ouzilevski fellowship report



Please mark your calendar to join us in Washington, DC on November 8, when returning fellow **Aron Ouzilevski** will deliver his fellowship report at the United States Institute of Peace about his two years reporting on Russian exiles fleeing authoritarianism, militarism, mobilization and a deteriorating economy at home before and after the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Based in Tbilisi, Georgia, Aron traveled widely to emigre hubs in Europe and beyond, observing on a granular level how creative and tech professionals, activists, journalists and civil society actors are adapting to new lives and careers, how they're affecting their host countries and what they reflect about Vladimir Putin's Russia. Read his dispatches [here](#).

Following his talk, Aron will join leading opposition figure Lyubov Sobol and other experts to discuss wider implications of his research and what the future may hold for Russian emigres and their home country.





Lyubov Sobol is a Russian opposition politician. She conducted journalistic investigations into corruption in Russia while serving as a lawyer for Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation. Currently, she leads anti-propaganda projects on YouTube, attracting hundreds of thousands of viewers. In 2023, Sobol was a senior fellow with the Center for European Policy Analysis.

Friday, November 8

2 p.m.

US Institute of Peace

2301 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC

Registration coming soon

ICWA Fall Dinner

And join us for ICWA's annual dinner that evening. *The New York Times* diplomatic correspondent Edward Wong will take part in a discussion moderated by former *Los Angeles Times* Beijing bureau chief Barbara Demick about China, authoritarianism and US foreign policy. It promises to be an engrossing conversation and a lively evening!

Edward Wong has reported for *The New York Times* for more than 25 years, focusing on international news. He covered the Iraq war at the height of the conflict in 2003 to 2007. He received a Livingston Award and was on a team of Pulitzer Prize finalists for war coverage. He later spent nearly a decade as a China correspondent and Beijing bureau chief. Viking Press published his book *At the Edge of Empire: A Family's Reckoning with China* earlier this year. Part memoir and reportage, it tells the story of modern China.



Barbara Demick was bureau chief for the *Los Angeles Times* in Beijing and Seoul, and previously reported from the Middle East and Balkans for the Philadelphia Inquirer. Her books include: *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea* and the recently published *Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town*.



Friday, November 8

6 p.m.

Cosmos Club

2121 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC

Details coming soon

Brett Simpson in Washington



Brett Simpson | Norway | 2024-2026

Peter Bird Martin fellow **Brett Simpson** joined alums and friends (left to right: **Andrew Tabler**, **Will** and **Amy Knowland**, **Derek Mitchell**, **Brett**, ICWA Executive Director **Gregory Feifer**, trustee **Naoko Aoki** and **Denny Lane**) for dinner before departing for her base in Tromsø, Norway, the world's northernmost city. Located 200 miles above the Arctic Circle and known as the "Gateway to the Arctic," it will serve as her base for the next two years as she explores one of the earth's fastest-changing environments. Brett will help untangle the intersecting environmental, economic, societal and political challenges of a region that's the center of mounting geopolitical competition over oil, gas and other resources.

Brett's article in *The Atlantic*, "[The Fight Over California's Ancient Water](#)," won a [2024 Covering Climate Now journalism prize](#) in the business and economics category.



Gayl Ness dies

Preeminent Southeast Asia scholar, University of Michigan professor emeritus of sociology and ICWA fellow (Southeast Asia, 1961-1964) Gayl Ness died on July 4. He was 95.

His fellowship took him to newly independent Malaya (present-day Malaysia) to study the country's fledgling development campaign. He dedicated his career to academic sociology with a global perspective at the University of Michigan, and wrote seven books.

Read his ICWA dispatches [here](#).

FELLOWS

Prachi Vidwans



South Korea's 'Honeymoon island' risks erasing its history

Jeju is a popular South Korean tourist spot promising escape from daily life, but the island's attractions risk eclipsing its painful history. Levinson fellow **Prachi Vidwans** visited the island to learn about the UNESCO-recognized women free-divers called haenyeo and other aspects of Jeju's cultural heritage. She found craggy shores suffused with melancholy and stories about islanders' unlikely survival.

Aron Ouzilevski

Russia's Sakha people find refuge in Kazakhstan

Russia's Sakha Republic is the coldest inhabited territory on Earth, where critics accuse state-backed corporations of transforming the region into a resource-extraction colony. Thousands of Sakha have emigrated to Kazakhstan after the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, hoping to escape growing militarism and economic uncertainty back home. Their exodus has opened a new connection between two cultures that share ancestral points of confluence, **Aron Ouzilevski** reports from the largest Kazakh city Almaty.



Russian teachers seek academic freedom in Central Asia

As the Kremlin steps up efforts to transform educational institutions into propaganda vehicles, some 60,000 scholars and educators have left Russia. Although their departure represents a significant loss for the country, they are working to preserve its intellectual capital in exile. Among the main destinations, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are also benefiting from the expertise they bring, Aron writes from the Uzbek capital Tashkent.



Belarusians in exile haunted by repression at home

Aron also spoke to Belarusians who have come to Georgia because of its visa-free scheme, joining the swollen ranks of Russian anti-war emigres. “Our country is effectively occupied by Russia,” a young Belarusian told him. Facing sophisticated surveillance methods and repression back home, some of these exiles have begun forming communities and networks abroad, reassessing their national identity and reclaiming their native tongue from Russification.



Rowland Robinson



Exploring Dutch coffeeshops then and now

Once some of the only places in the world where patrons could publicly enjoy cannabis without fear, Dutch coffeeshops face growing government scrutiny, public apathy and competition from US and German policy models. While the coffeeshops protect users from unscrupulous street dealers, their conflictual relationship with the government also boosts organized crime and unnecessary risks for users. Andrew Weil fellow **Rowland Robinson** explores an Amsterdam institution.

Solving the Dutch heroin crisis

Decades of Dutch public health policies, including for medical intervention like methadone maintenance and drug consumption rooms, curbed the country’s heroin crisis of the 1970s and ’80s. The measures have reduced harm, increased public safety and cost taxpayers significantly less than what Americans pay today. Rowland investigates a Dutch success story as the United States grapples with its own opioid epidemic.



Edric Huang



A history of Taipei's main LGBTQ+ public space

Curious about the transformation of a shopping zone called Ximen Red House Plaza from an “abandoned ghost temple” to the booming epicenter of gay life in western Taipei, Mixner fellow **Edric Huang** uncovers the history of the city’s main LGBTQ+ space. Once described by the news media as a den of iniquity, the Red House is now viewed as a live barometer of how widely LGBTQ-friendly policy and sentiment extend in Taiwan’s capital.

Democracy in Taiwan’s streets

In late May, more than 100,000 people filled the streets around Taiwan’s parliament to protest reforms expanding the legislature’s powers, which they say threatens the country’s democratic stability. Many in the so-called Bluebird Movement fear the recently enacted changes may provide a pathway for Taiwan’s conservative KMT party to make national security and other sensitive information available to China. Edric reports about three days of mass demonstrations.



ALUMNI



Former fellow Jill Winder (Germany, 2004-2006) met fellow Brett Simpson in Berlin last month before Brett departed for Norway

“[Countering Iran in East Syria Means Moderating the SDF](#),” by **Andrew Tabler** (Lebanon, Syria, 2005-2007), Washington Institute for Near East Policy, August 16, 2024

“[The Growing Movement to Make Global Philanthropy More Feminist](#),” by **Astha Rajvanshi** (India, 2020-2022), *TIME*, August 2, 2024

“[7 Last-Minute Escapes for Labor Day Weekend](#),” by **Shannon Sims** (Brazil, 2012-2014), *The New York Times*, August 19, 2024

“[The Long Struggle to Save an Istanbul Grove Pays Off](#),” by **Joshua Levkowitz** (Turkey, Istanbul, 2021-2023), *Inkstick Media*, July 2, 2024

“[A Culling Plan Unifies Turkey’s Dog Lovers](#),” by **Joshua Levkowitz** (Turkey, Istanbul, 2021-2023), *New Lines Magazine*, July 15, 2024

“[Germany’s Far-Right Surge Isn’t New](#),” by **Emily Schultheis** (Germany, 2019-2021), *Foreign Policy*, June 15, 2024

“[Israel tests Hamas-free ‘bubbles’ plan for post-war Gaza](#),” by **Neri Zilber** (Israel, 2011-2013), *Financial Times*, July 1, 2024

The Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) [announced its 2024 Sustainability Award winner](#) in the non-profit category to be **Willy Foote’s** (Mexico, 1995-1997) Root Capital.

Updates

Trustee **Onyinye Edeh** (Nigeria, 2016 - 2018) announced the birth of a baby boy, Kallen Tobechukwu Vincent, on August 10, 2024. Mother and baby are doing well, and father is in Nigeria awaiting a US visa interview date.

Joshua Levkowitz (Turkey, 2021-2023) has moved from Istanbul to New York City, where he is humanitarian adviser to the United Arab Emirates mission to the United Nations.

Please send your news to icwa@icwa.org.



SOCIAL MEDIA

ICWA fellows celebrate Pride



Throughout the summer, our fellows sent us photos from summer festivals and marches, museum exhibits and film recommendations to celebrate Pride. Mixner LGBTQ+ fellow **Edric Huang** visited Taipei’s Museum of Contemporary Art for an exhibition highlighting the importance of media in helping people understand and empathize with the LGBTQ+ population. **Rowland Robinson** and **Prachi Vidwans** captured vibrant images from rallies in Amsterdam and Seoul.

And although no Pride events were held in Georgia this year, **Aron Ouzilevski** recommended the 2019 Swedish-Georgian film “And Then We Danced,” which centers around a fierce rivalry and romantic affair between two male Georgian dancers struggling against the confines of conservative Tbilisi.

We invite you to follow us on **X, Threads, Facebook, Instagram** and **LinkedIn** for updates from our fellows in the field, analysis and commentary on global developments, alumni news, upcoming events and more. Please tag ICWA in any of your relevant posts and share any feedback or ideas!



ABOUT ICWA

The Institute of Current World Affairs has sent outstanding young professionals abroad for more than 97 years to acquire deep understanding of global societies. Institute fellows have become some of America’s leading experts on international cultures and affairs, thanks to the unique fellowships first designed by our founders Charles R. Crane and Walter Rogers. We continue their tradition with your [support](#).

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