



INSTITUTE of CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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NEWS

REGISTER: June 12

Pioneering drug policy in the Netherlands, Portugal and Brazil
Rowland Robinson fellowship report



Andrew Weil Fellow **Rowland Robinson** is wrapping up two years investigating progressive policy and integrative health care approaches to problem substance use in the Netherlands, Portugal and Brazil. He's spent time with people who use drugs as well as harm reduction workers on the streets and in care facilities, speaking to policymakers in the corridors of power and experts at international conferences during his remarkable fellowship. Please join us in Washington, DC on Friday, June 12, when he'll report about his findings and their lessons for the United States.

Following his talk, Rowland will join an expert panel to discuss wider implications of his research, with [Amanda Latimore](#), [Maritza Perez Medina](#), [Jon Heppen](#) and [Gordon Smith](#).



Friday, June 12

10:00 a.m.

George Washington University
Elliott School of International Affairs
1957 E St NW, Washington, DC
Lindner Commons Room 602

Register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pioneering-drug-policy-in-the-netherlands-portugal-and-brazil-tickets-1985944125339>

Ann Peters joins Board of Trustees

Ann Peters is a lawyer and journalist who spent more than two decades as director of university and community outreach for the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, creating and overseeing its Campus Consortium program. Previously, she worked at United Press International, Human Rights Watch and Open Society Institute, and practiced law at Harmon, Curran, Spielberg & Eisenberg, LLP. We're delighted to have her!



Tokyo welcome



Newly minted Blakemore-ICWA fellow **Julia Walton** met visiting former fellow (Greece, 2021-2023) and ICWA editor **Steven Tagle** in Tokyo this month. Starting in September, Julia will spend a year examining youth civic participation across Japan and how it's evolving amid demographic change and a shifting political landscape, before completing her comparative literature dissertation at Columbia University.

FELLOWS

Mahli Knutson



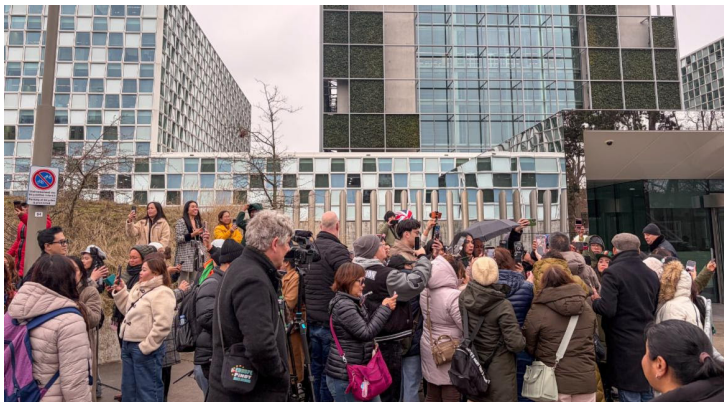
New Robert and Patricia Levinson Fellow **Mahli Knutson** arrived in China this month to begin two years examining changing conceptions of family and childhood, and the state’s role in family life. She touched down in Shanghai (above) before heading to Guangzhou. Stay tuned!

Sabrina Ochoa



Justifying murder

In her first dispatch from the Philippines this winter, **Sabrina Ochoa** started examining how abstract legal concepts such as crimes against humanity are playing out in the lives of the victims. As former President Rodrigo Duterte faces trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Sabrina met family members of those murdered in police extrajudicial killings during Duterte’s six-year “war on drugs.” Their quest for justice is gaining new urgency with Duterte’s daughter, Sara, planning to run for president in 2028.



The people's proceedings

Next, Sabrina sped to The Hague to attend the opening of Duterte's trial on charges of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court—one of the most intensely scrutinized proceedings in its history. The former president's decision not to attend the hearings enabled his victims to take center stage, she reports. Back in the Philippines, she says, many gathered for television watch parties to follow the developments live.

A heavy cross to bear

Back in the Philippines, Sabrina traveled to the island of Marinduque, the "exact geographical center of the country's 7,000-isle western Pacific archipelago," where locals were celebrating the Moriones Festival. It was one event among hundreds taking place around the nation during Holy Week, in a society where the Catholic Church is extremely influential. Many clergy members went along with former President Duterte's drug war, she writes, but some helped lead the opposition and are now central to his trial in The Hague.



Brett Simpson

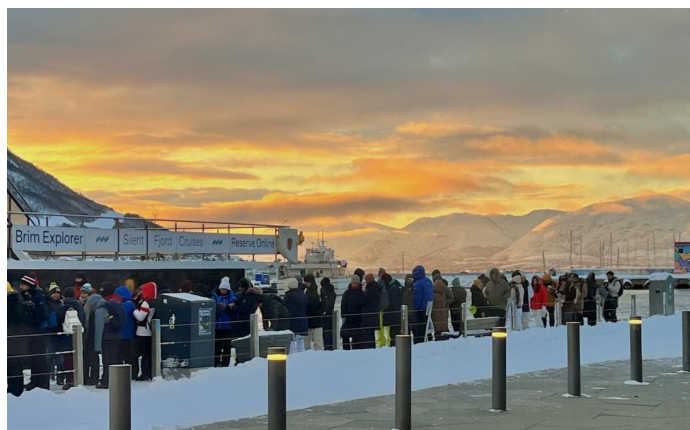


'Cold response' seeks warm coverage

"It looked like the most souped-up car show I could ever imagine," Peter Bird Martin Fellow **Brett Simpson** writes from Norway about NATO's "Cold Response" Arctic military exercises in March. She was struck by the efforts NATO and the host country exerted to ensure positive press coverage at a time of great uncertainty for the future of the military alliance and its European members in the face of Washington's aggression. The exercise also inflicted "significant and avoidable environmental costs," she writes, in the highly fragile ecosystem it was meant to help protect.

The 'Barcelona of the north'

During nearly two years living in Tromsø, Norway, Brett has seen countless parka-clad masses from around the world descend on the remote Arctic city for the northern lights and other winter experiences, competing with locals for space and straining infrastructure. She considers the hunt for such "transcendent experiences" and their social and environmental effects amid urgent warnings that Tromsø must impose an immediate cap on tourist numbers. (*Her piece filed and ready to publish before *The New York Times* also reported on the topic less comprehensively.)



Rowland Robinson



The road to Carnival

In February, Rowland joined pre-Carnival festivities organized by Brazil’s coastal city Fortaleza. Rather than the “hedonistic wellspring of sinful chaos” often depicted in the media, Rowland found the Carnival parties closer to a collection of people who love to listen to live music “dressed however they like.” The parties offered a rare space “for traditionally marginalized communities enjoying themselves publicly without fear.”

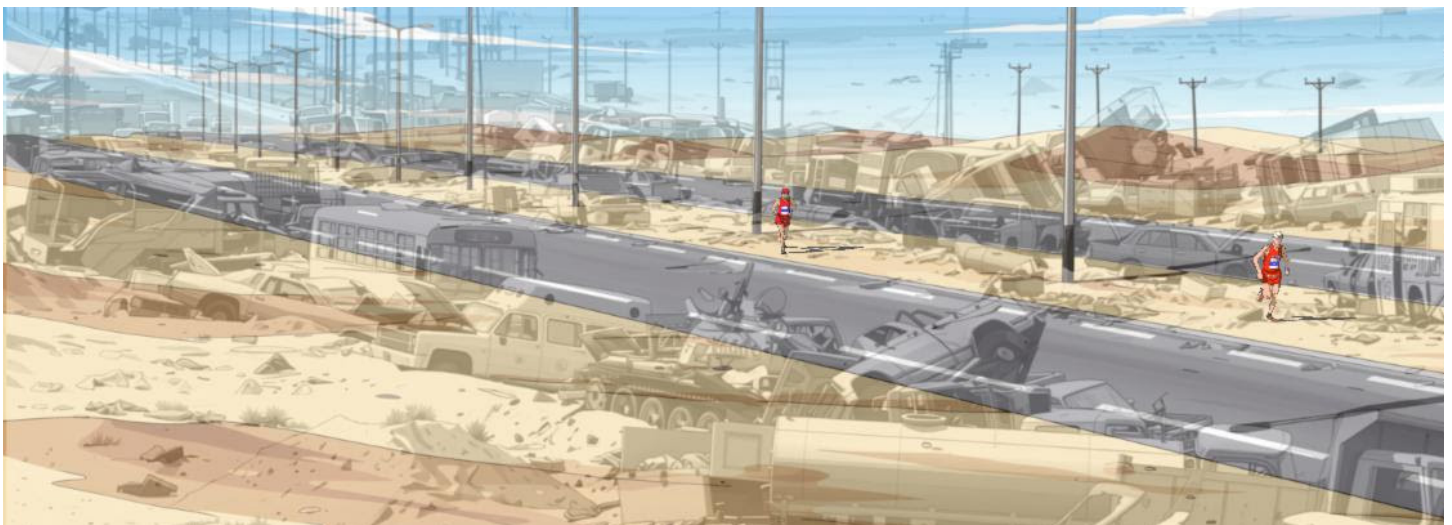
Structural dominance in Brazilian politics

Staying in Fortaleza, Rowland investigated Brazil’s regional power dynamics and major issues ahead of presidential, legislative and regional elections later this year. The governor’s race alone “promises to be an eventful campaign mixing family feuds, political priests, gun-toting bandidos and ever-present corruption,” he writes. The stakes are high. With the son of the jailed far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro running for his father’s old office against incumbent President Lula, the result could prompt a “far more consequential national shift toward ideological conservatism and overt authoritarianism.”



Read more fellows’ dispatches on our [website](#).

COMPASS



“Highway of Death” by Bryn Barnard

[Bryn Barnard](#) on his running the gruelling Kuwait Desert Marathon along the “Highway of Death,” where American military pilots savaged the retreating Iraqi army in 1991.

[Suzy Hansen](#) describes a mob attack on a Syrian candy store in Istanbul, laying out its neighborhood’s various ethnic and national groups, and their strifes, in an excerpt from her new book about “Erdogan’s glitzy, corrupt megalopolis,” From Life Itself.

[Marvin Kalb](#) takes readers step by step recounting his groundbreaking NBC News investigations into the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II and why the all-but-certain culprit, the Kremlin, still hasn’t been officially named.

[Joel Millman](#) writes about Ethiopian comedians making it the United States, the latest in a storied tradition of performers, including Charlie Chaplin and Jerry Lewis, who helped shape American comedy by mining immigrant experiences.

[Steven Tagle](#) photographs Chongqing and Chengdu in southwest China.

[Felicia Gonzalez](#) reviews a family restaurant that’s an institution in Lisbon.

[Elizabeth Wise](#) sent a postcard from Hungary during the election that swept the authoritarian Prime Minister Victor Orban out of power after 16 years.

[Rami Al Amin](#) calculates how much of his life that has been lost to conflict in Lebanon.

[Dmitry Bykov](#) writes about the early Soviet writer Vladimir Zazubrin’s new relevance.

[Gregory Feifer](#) believes the real aim of authoritarians such as Russian President Vladimir Putin is to maximize chaos.

[Joshua Levkowitz](#) tries fried Chickenjoy and Jolly Spaghetti in a New York outlet of the rapidly expanding Philippines fast-food chain Jollibee.

[Anna Badkhen](#) tries to make sense of a violent world in a haunting excerpt from her new book To See Beyond.

From the Archives: [Scott Erich](#) reports from Oman in 2015 on the southern shore of the Strait of Hormuz, which he says feels like both center and edge of the world.

ALUMNI



Alex Brenner (China, 2003-2005, third from right) joined dinner with (R to L) outgoing China fellow Mahli Knutson, Elizabeth Feifer, Mahli's partner Alvin Bui, Eva Woo, Greg Feifer and the leading China scholar Ken Lieberthal, this spring in Washington, DC.

“[What We Saw in Cuba Shocked Us](#),” **Rep. Pramila Jayapal** (India, 1995-1996) and Rep. Jonathan L. Jackson, *The New York Times*, May 11, 2026

“[Why This War?](#)” **Suzy Hansen** (Turkey, 2007-2009), Pankaj Mishra and Ben Rhodes discussed Iran for a New York Review of Books online event, April 22, 2026

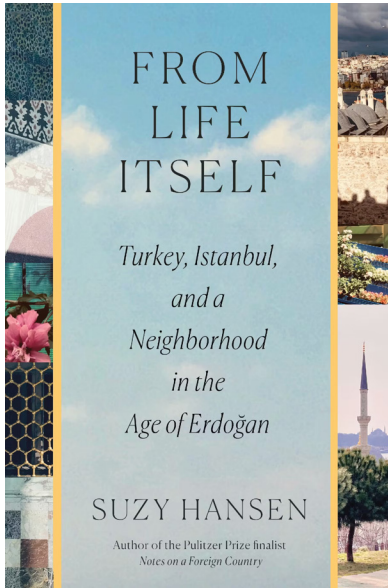
“[Syria Is Not Ready to Wage War Beyond Its Borders](#),” **Andrew Tabler** (Lebanon, Syria, 2005-2007), Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 24, 2026

“[The Majestic Artistry of the Mardi Gras Indians](#),” **Shannon Sims** (Brazil, 2012-2014), *The New York Times*, March 13, 2026

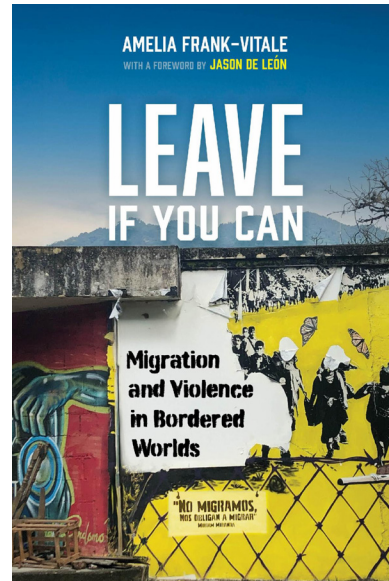
“[How the US far right bought into the myth of white South Africa's persecution](#),” by **Eve Fairbanks** (South Africa, 2009-2011), *The Guardian*, March 10, 2026

Please send your news to icwa@icwa.org.

New alumni books



Suzy Hansen's new book, [From Life Itself: Turkey, Istanbul, and a Neighborhood in the Age of Erdoğan](#), published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in April.



Amelia Frank-Vitale's first book, [Leave If You Can: Migration and Violence in Bordered Worlds](#), published by University of California Press in March.

SOCIAL MEDIA



ICWA IN THE FIELD: SABRINA OCHOA

Sabrina Ochoa visited the Masungi Georeserve in Rizal, Philippines, a forest conservation park showcasing some of the country's most biodiverse habitats. Efforts to protect the park are coming up against powerful logging and mining interests.

Follow us on **Bluesky, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn** and **Threads** 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

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