



INSTITUTE of CURRENT
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NEWS

VIDEO:

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



America's opioid crisis—which has cost the country \$1 trillion so far—is solvable, Andrew Weil Fellow **Rowland Robinson** said during his final fellowship report in Washington on June 12 at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

After two years examining how cultural and historical shifts in three very different countries led to the enactment of progressive drug policies, he told the audience, he was confident compassionate public health policies can uphold individual dignity and ensure safer, more prosperous communities.

Following his talk, Rowland joined experts **Amanda Latimore**, **Maritza Perez Medina**, **Jon Heppen** and **Gordon Smith** to discuss wider implications of his research.

[Watch Video](#)

<https://www.icwa.org/drug-policy-fellowship-report-video/>



Former Trustee Mary Lynne Bird dies

Longtime institute trustee and stalwart supporter **Mary Lynne Bird** died peacefully in her sleep on June 13, surrounded by her family. Mary Lynne served as executive director of the American Geographical Society until her retirement. She was not only a thoughtful globalist who carefully helped steward ICWA's mission, but also among the kindest and most sympathetic mentors of generations of fellows.

FELLOWS

Diana Kruzman



New Peter Bird Martin Fellow **Diana Kruzman** arrived in Jordan in July, with plans to also be based in Egypt and Lebanon. She'll be investigating how communities are adapting to crisis, and reporting more widely in the Middle East during a time of intense upheaval.

Mahli Knutson

New Robert and Patricia Levinson Fellow **Mahli Knutson** arrived at her base in Guangzhou, China, northwest of Hong Kong, where she photographed residents of the Clifford Estate, an elite residential neighborhood.



Sabrina Ochoa



When a far-off war comes knocking at your door

The US-Israeli war against Iran has disrupted fuel supplies to the Philippines, a country almost entirely dependent on foreign oil. **Sabrina Ochoa** visited far-flung islands and remote provinces, where rising prices are threatening the livelihoods of thousands of transport workers and tourist operators, and exacerbating existing inequities. Like the International Criminal Court's trial of former President Rodrigo Duterte, she reports, the energy crisis is showcasing how outside influences may affect Filipino perceptions about international institutions.

Prohibition, populism and public health

After the terrible legacy of former President Duterte's "war on drugs," Filipinos are advocating to replace the country's harsh drugs law with more progressive harm reduction policies, Sabrina reports from Manila. But advocacy groups are splitting over different approaches to decriminalization and regulation, medical and recreational drug use amid deep-seated skepticism and widespread fear around drugs.



Brett Simpson



Palantir next door?

Is Palantir CEO Alex Karp's purchase of property in northern Norway a security threat? Or just an uncomfortable reminder of the deep-burrowing global influence of a handful of American billionaires?

Brett Simpson investigates Karp's presence in Arctic Norway, as well as Palantir's defense contracts and expanding space industry footprint, and how large language models are also helping preserve and spread Indigenous Sámi language.

Rowland Robinson

Underground in Brazil's mines

From African slave engineers to European mechanical engineers, Brazil has historically used foreign expertise and capital to extract wealth from its natural resources. With the new rush for critical minerals, the country is again at a crossroads, Andrew Weil Fellow **Rowland Robinson** writes. He explored the country's gold mines, their history and environmental impact while President Trump and his Brazilian counterpart Lula Inacio da Silva negotiated access to Brazil's mineral deposits in May.



Up the Amazon River

Closing out his fellowship, Rowland sailed up the Amazon River. Any environmental defense must also realize the region is more than a virgin forest occupied by saintly natives and evil loggers, he said. There's a bustling society with ordinary families struggling to realize everyday needs. Along the jungle's edge, he found wooden stilt houses, abundant churches and cattle pasture.



Read all our fellows' dispatches on our website, www.icwa.org.

COMPASS



"In Istanbul, remembering the world's oldest Greek school" by Demetrios Ioannou

[Demetrios Ioannou](#) visits historic Phanar College in Istanbul, whose fate is uncertain after it was forced to close last fall to undergo seismic renovations.

[Bryn Barnard](#) on Kuwait's film industry, the beating heart of Arab television and movies, and his own experiences as an actor and writer.

[Edouard-François de Lencquesaing](#) on the college of St. Omer in France, which taught Enlightenment values to several of America's Founding Fathers, as the US celebrates its 250th anniversary.

[Marco Zatterin](#) on the EU's commitment to develop critical rare minerals after years of strategic blunders.

[Joel Millman](#) on Latin American consulates in the US that are helping their citizens navigate life as "illegals" in an economy that desperately needs them.

[Robert Coalson](#) reviews new books that shed light on Putin's horrific war of choice against Ukraine and its broad popular support.

[Fabrice Houdart](#) envisions the future of the global LGBTQ+ movement without US leadership.

[Elizabeth Wise](#) sent a postcard from France's Aisne region where, far from Washington-Paris disputes, the transatlantic relationship is lovingly maintained.

[Andrei Prudnikow](#) describes how the Kremlin is enlisting Western expat bloggers to boost its propaganda.

From the Archives

[Dick Nolte](#) on a "turning point" in US-Arab relations: a 1952 US mission to fly stranded pilgrims to Mecca.

[Jill Winder](#) reflects on Germans' complex relationship with their national flag during the 2006 World Cup.

[Erik Guyot](#) reports on a Philippine coup in 1987 when his source attempted to help overthrow President Corazon Aquino.

[Neil Silberman](#) explicates the battle between archaeologists and rabbinical authorities over Israel's excavation sites in 1985.

[Willy Foote](#) investigates the dangerous competition between private garbage collectors in Mexico in 1996.

ALUMNI



New York-based ICWA alumni (L to R) Aron Ouzilevski, Joshua Levkowitz, Katherine Kono, Ezra Fieser and Scott Erich join departing Middle East fellow Diana Kuzman at a send-off dinner in May.

“[‘Summer of Freedom’ Review: Waking Up From a Nightmare](#),” by **Joel Millman** (El Salvador, 1987-1989), Wall Street Journal, June 17, 2026

“[Syria’s Pipeline Dream Meets Hard Realities](#),” by **Andrew Tabler** (Lebanon, Syria, 2005-2007), Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 10, 2026

“[Trump intelligence adviser previously helped father pursue millions from Kremlin-linked bank, leaked documents show](#),” by **David Kenner** (Saudi Arabia, 2019 – 2021), International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, June 8, 2026

“[Made in the USA](#),” **Suzy Hansen** (Turkey, 2007-2009) reviews two books by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth for The New York Review of Books, June 11, 2026

“[The Biggest Tell That Something Was Written by AI](#)” by **Eve Fairbanks** (South Africa, 2009-2011), The Atlantic, May 29, 2026

“[Ukraine’s Weirdest Front Line](#)” by **Emily Schultheis** (Germany, 2019-2021), POLITICO, May 8, 2026

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SOCIAL MEDIA



Returning fellow **Rowland Robinson** with a pink river dolphin in the wild during his trip up the Amazon River.

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

The Institute of Current World Affairs has sent outstanding young professionals abroad for more than 100 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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