

Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

WRITING INTO
THE SUNSET

Featuring Annie Proulx
& Shawn Wong

CRIMINAL JUSTICE
AS SOCIAL JUSTICE

Featuring Bruce Western

A Place for Art

SPRING 2020

PROGRAM COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

Local Program Committees and Representatives bring members together to forge social and intellectual connections, promote civil discourse, explore important issues, and elevate the impact of Academy work.

COMMITTEES OR REPRESENTATIVES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE FOLLOWING CITIES AND AREAS

Berkeley, CA
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 South Florida
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 Washington, DC



Seattle Committee members Patricia Ebrey (far left) and Charles Hirschman (far right) congratulate new member Ya-Qin Zhang (with Jian Wang) at the Committee's inaugural reception.

FEATURED COMMITTEE

Seattle Program Committee
 Established in 2019

Chair:

Charles Hirschman (University of Washington)

Inaugural Event:

Member Reception at the
 University of Washington Club

Public Program:

Writing into the Sunset: An Evening with **Annie Proulx**
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Future Plans:

Dinner Talk for Members and Guests

For more information, visit amacad.org/local.

To initiate local activities in your area, contact Laurie McDonough, Morton L. Mandel Director of Membership Engagement, at lmcdonough@amacad.org.

Refugees waiting to register in the refugee camp of Vinojug in Gevgelija, Macedonia, after having crossed the border with Greece at Eidomeni, December 23, 2015.



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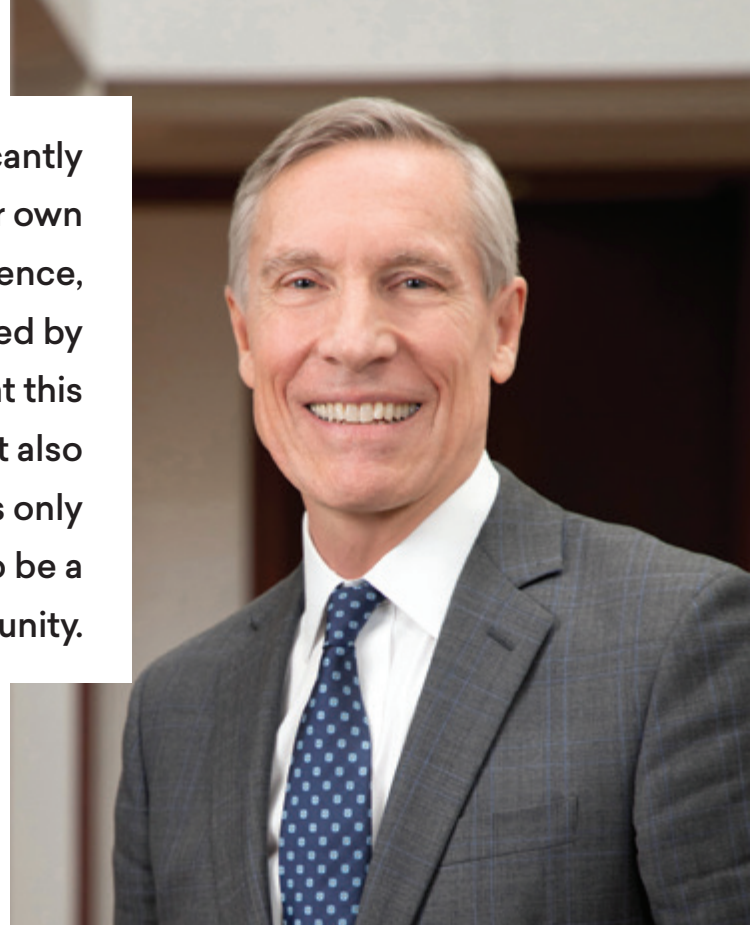
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“ The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the life of the Academy, as it has our own lives. And yet, our work does go on. The resilience, dedication, and commitment demonstrated by Academy members and staff have ensured that this is not just a moment of great challenge, but also one of great pride. This time of adversity has only heightened the sense of honor I feel to be a member of this extraordinary community.



From the President

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones healthy, safe, and in good spirits. As you likely suspect, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the life of the Academy, as it has our own lives. Academy events and travel have been canceled or postponed, and our staff have transitioned to a period of remote work.

And yet, our work does go on. The resilience, dedication, and commitment demonstrated by Academy members and staff have ensured that this is not just a moment of great challenge, but also one of great pride. This time of adversity has only heightened the sense of honor I feel to be a member of this extraordinary community.

The current crisis also serves as yet another reminder of the increasingly interconnected nature of our global system. A local outbreak quickly becomes a pandemic, with far-reaching implications for global public health, economic systems, international security, and human rights. The Academy has a long history of convening its members to address these kinds of global challenges, which is reflected by the events and activities detailed in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

Let me offer a few examples. In February, David Miliband, president and chief executive officer of the

International Rescue Committee, addressed a gathering of Academy members and guests at the inaugural Jonathan F. Fanton Lecture in New York and discussed both the causes and potential solutions to the present global refugee crisis. In November, Academy members gathered at the University of California, Berkeley, for a discussion on arms trafficking and its destabilizing role in international relations. And the latest volume of *Dædalus*, the Spring 2020 issue, continues the Academy's long tradition of addressing the global security challenges posed by nuclear weapons and articulates a framework for strategic stability in a "New Nuclear Age."

I hope this issue of the *Bulletin* will inspire you to think of new ways in which the Academy can help build a global future that is safe, prosperous, and just. As always, I encourage you to share your thoughts with me, your fellow members, and the Academy staff.

As members of the American Academy, we share a commitment to advancing the common good. But we also share a commitment to one another. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to you during these challenging times.

David W. Oxtoby



Dædalus Explores the Challenges of a Multipolar Nuclear Environment

We have entered a new nuclear era. The Cold War world dominated by only two nuclear superpowers no longer exists (even if Russia and the United States still possess the lion's share of nuclear weapons); it has grown into a multipolar nuclear environment. Five nuclear-armed states – China, India, and Pakistan, in addition to Russia and the United States with its allies Britain and France – now set the contours of

a multisided matrix, determine whether and when nuclear weapons will be used, and bear the responsibility for deciding whether and by what means the risk of nuclear war can be averted. Other states with nuclear weapons, such as North Korea, further complicate the picture by creating additional pathways to nuclear conflict and generating U.S. responses that stir Russian and Chinese opposition and counteractions. Israel's nuclear arsenal, meanwhile,

remains recessed and opaque. Thus, U.S. attention, once centered on the prospect of a war between two nuclear hegemony, has shifted to threats associated with the nuclear ambitions of multiple countries and to the possibility of nuclear terrorism.

The Spring 2020 issue of *Dædalus*, "Meeting the Challenges of a New Nuclear Age," guest edited by Robert Legvold (Columbia University) and Christopher F. Chyba

(Princeton University), builds on the Academy's long history of studies on arms control. Connected to the Academy's project on "Meeting the Challenges of the New Nuclear Age," this volume examines some of the possible escalation pathways that could lead one or more nuclear-weapon states to use nuclear weapons. A collection of fourteen essays authored by a diverse group of security scholars, physicists, statesmen, and political scientists, the issue offers analyses that are sensitive to the challenges and potential dangers posed by a world with nine nuclear players, and considers developments and measures that could alter or mitigate these obstacles and risks.

The essays together highlight five challenges and dangers in today's more multifarious setting: 1) There are a lot more players. Originally limited to the United States and the Soviet Union, competitive and potentially adversarial nuclear relationships have expanded to include, for example, India and Pakistan, the United States and China, India and China, and the United States and North Korea. 2) Advances in weapons technology, including cyber and artificial intelligence, are making this shifting environment far more complex and dangerous. These advances raise concern over the survivability of nuclear forces, blur the line between conventional and nuclear war-fighting, risk transforming space warfare into an integral part of nuclear warfare, and, in a crisis, potentially decrease decision-making time. 3) Concepts key to understanding the original Cold War nuclear era – such as strategic deterrence and nuclear arms control – are either under stress, collapsing, or undergoing unpredictable change. 4) The already-contested realm of nuclear norms is growing increasingly murky and unsettled. The "nuclear taboo" seems further weakened by the attention given to the

"Meeting the Challenges of a New Nuclear Age" Spring 2020 issue of *Dædalus*

Introduction: The Search for Strategic Stability in a New Nuclear Era

Robert Legvold & Christopher F. Chyba

A Nuclear World Transformed: The Rise of Multilateral Disorder

Steven E. Miller

Russia's Nuclear Weapons in a Multipolar World: Guarantors of Sovereignty, Great Power Status & More

Anya Loukianova Fink & Olga Oliker

The Revival of Nuclear Competition in an Altered Geopolitical Context: A Chinese Perspective

Li Bin

On Adapting Nuclear Deterrence to Reduce Nuclear Risk

Brad Roberts

The End of Arms Control?

Linton F. Brooks

Why Arms Control?

Jon Brook Wolfsthal

What History Can Teach

James Cameron

Cyber Warfare & Inadvertent Escalation

James M. Acton

New Technologies & Strategic Stability

Christopher F. Chyba

Nuclear Disarmament without the Nuclear-Weapon States:

The Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty

Harald Müller & Carmen Wunderlich

A Way Forward

James Timbie

Life beyond Arms Control: Moving toward a Global Regime of Nuclear Restraint & Responsibility

Nina Tannenwald

Conclusion: Strategic Stability & Nuclear War

Christopher F. Chyba & Robert Legvold

development of weapons for limited, and therefore more plausible, nuclear use. And lastly, 5) the pathways to inadvertent nuclear war have multiplied across more regions and relationships.

The result of these conversations in the *Dædalus* issue is not a comprehensive exploration of all facets of a changing nuclear environment. Rather, the focus is on salient

aspects of the changes underway among the major nuclear powers, with a primary emphasis on the United States, Russia, and China. The intent is to capture the essential features of the nuclear world we have entered, and to stimulate among policy-makers and the engaged public a recognition of the challenges that it poses.



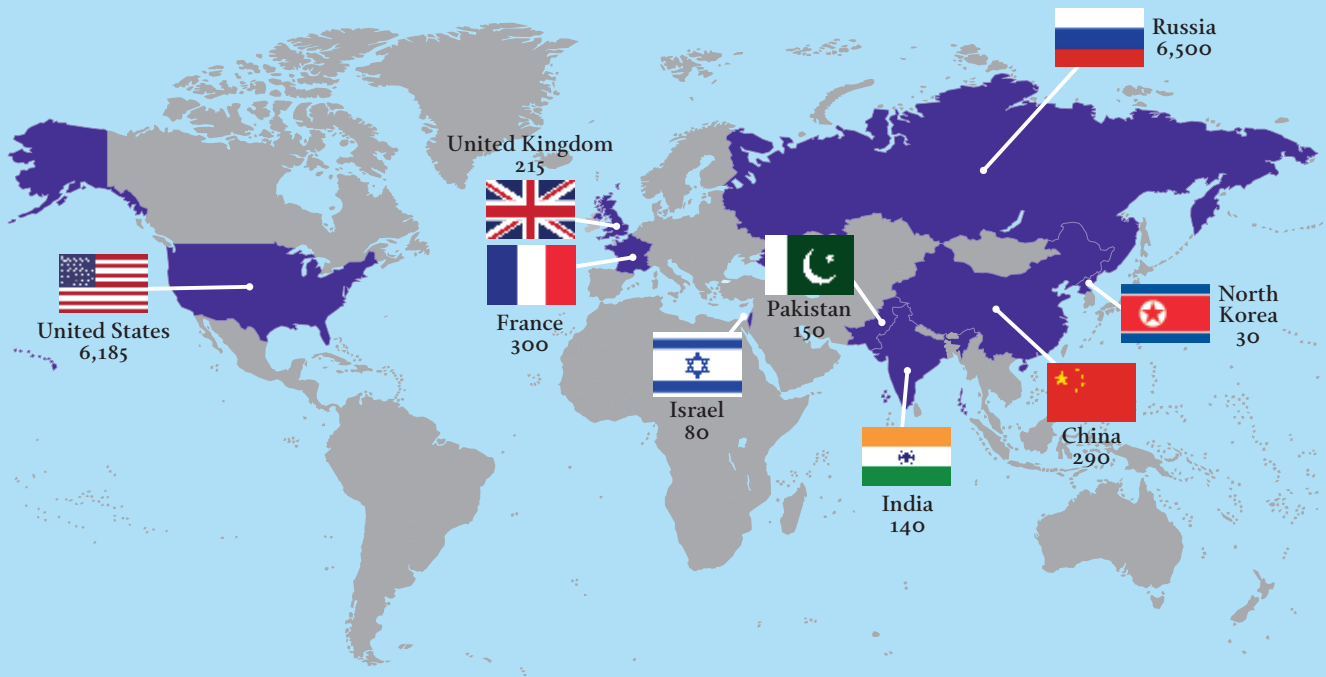
“Meeting the Challenges of a New Nuclear Age” is available online at www.amacad.org/daedalus/meeting-challenges-new-nuclear-age. For questions and more information, please contact daedalus@amacad.org.

Page 4: Artist’s rendering of a hypersonic boost-glide vehicle. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, United States Department of Defense.

Below: Inventory numbers include deployed warheads, warheads in the military stockpile, and retired but intact warheads waiting for dismantlement. Source: Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, “Status of World Nuclear Forces,” Federation of American Scientists, May 2019 update.

U.S. attention, once centered on the prospect of a war between two nuclear hegemony, has shifted to threats associated with the nuclear ambitions of multiple countries and to the possibility of nuclear terrorism.

Estimated Nuclear Warhead Inventories, 2019





21st Century Democracy in Practice

In early February, the Academy welcomed Americans from around the nation for a day-long convening on the practice of democratic citizenship. The event was a culmination of the extensive grassroots outreach and listening sessions that have been a hallmark of the work of the Academy's Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship.

Led by co-chairs Danielle Allen of Harvard University, Stephen Heintz of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and Eric Liu of Citizens University, the Commission was formed in 2018 and includes thirty-five scholars, practitioners, former elected officials, members of the media, business leaders, and philanthropists.

The Commission's diverse membership extends across ideological lines: a fundamental premise of the Commission's work is that reinventing democracy cannot be a partisan project.

To ensure its work reflects people's everyday experiences and engagement with democracy, the Commission held nearly fifty listening sessions across the country, connecting with hundreds of Americans, in large cities and small towns from coast to coast. The Commissioners wanted to hear from people in local communities: What, in their opinions, is wrong with the way our system is working? What could be better? How are individuals and organizations across the country working to make it better? The

Commission spoke with a diverse cohort of Americans, such as grassroots organizers, activists, business leaders, refugees and immigrants, elected officials, college students, community and faith leaders, Americans with disabilities, and educators. The individuals who participated in these listening sessions represented a wide range of demographic, economic, and geographic groups.

These conversations not only shaped the Commission's forthcoming final report and recommendations, but they also created a network of people who are engaged with and are working in their communities. This effort was the first of its kind in Academy history. The Commission heard from individuals whose



inspirational and innovative work on the ground is strengthening their cities and neighborhoods. From conservative thought leaders in Mississippi to Cambodian refugees in Massachusetts, the Commission learned about the challenges and opportunities that Americans face as participants in our democracy, as well as the fears and aspirations they have as they think about its future.

As co-chair Stephen Heintz noted, “Americans are profoundly disappointed with the state of our democracy, not because they reject its basic ideals, but rather because they cherish them – and can see clearly that we have fallen short. I found it impossible to experience the engagement sessions and not to be powerfully inspired. The voices, stories, priorities, and suggestions of the American people are at the heart of the Commission’s work.”

On February 7, the Academy hosted more than seventy participants of these listening sessions as well as Commission members, civic leaders, and philanthropists. They came together at the Academy’s

headquarters in Cambridge to hear from one another, share their work, and get a preview of the Commission’s final recommendations.

Amanda Gorman, the inaugural youth poet laureate of the United States, opened the day’s events with a reading of a poem she composed in celebration of Independence Day, entitled “Believers Hymn for the Republic.” She described the challenge of writing that poem and her concern that her words would celebrate the Founding Fathers without also recognizing their humanity and faults. Ultimately, she said her approach reflects that of the Commission and of the participants who were gathered in the room. “I decided,” she said, “I would take that as my own duty and pay that forward – to continue the mission. To not look at American democracy as something that is broken, but to look at it as something that’s unfinished. And, I think that’s something this convening represents. We all here know that there’s work to do.”

The program also featured three plenary panels that focused on the

Amanda Gorman, the inaugural youth poet laureate of the United States.

following topics: 1) inspiring a commitment to American democracy and each other; 2) empowering voters; and 3) expanding civic infrastructure to create bridges across lines of difference in communities. In a panel moderated by Commission co-chair Eric Liu, Mina Layba, Legislative Affairs Manager for the City of Thousand Oaks, discussed the impact of a mass shooting and wildfires on civic engagement in a California community. Cameron Patterson, Director of the Moton Museum, told the story of the Moton School’s role in the civil rights movement and the importance of the museum as a place of celebration and healing in Farmville, Virginia. Serene Jones, President of Union Theological Seminary, shared the challenges confronting faith leaders in a hyperpartisan and polarized environment. And John Wood, Jr. of Better Angels discussed his work and his experience as a conservative Republican living in the Los Angeles area.



Academy President David W. Oxtoby with Commission Co-Chairs Stephen Heintz, Danielle Allen, and Eric Liu.

Vanessa Grossl, a participant from Lexington, Kentucky, who in her presentation had described the community impact and process of removing Confederate statues from the city's public square, noted after the event, "This work, combining the bright minds and experiences of the Commission members and their networks with best practices from around the country, gives me high hope for the future of not only our nation but its role in leading the citizens of the world toward a brighter path forward."

Video of the day's panels and performances are available to view on the Academy's website.

Nearly 250 years ago, the nation's founders came together to build a functioning democracy. But today, the U.S. population has grown exponentially to nearly 330 million people, distributed over an area nearly nine times larger than the thirteen original colonies. The nation

is more diverse and larger than ever. Given these immense changes, how can we make a system that was created almost 250 years ago still work? The Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship was created to answer this question.

Focused on the impact of political institutions, political culture, and civil society, the Commission's work explores the factors that encourage and discourage people from becoming engaged in their communities; sheds light on the mechanisms that help people connect across demographic and ideological boundaries and identifies the spaces

that promote such interaction; examines how the transformations in our media environment have altered what civic engagement looks like in many communities; and makes recommendations that will encourage participation and empower citizens. In summer 2020, the Commission will release its final report and recommendations that focus on each of these areas.



For more on the Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship, please visit www.amacad.org/project/practice-democratic-citizenship.

"A democratic society is a set of shared ideals, right? It only works as a group. That's sort of its definition. . . . And that, I think, can become a vicious circle. The worse the system's working, the less effort people are going to put into the system; it's a potential vicious circle we get into."

– Participant in a listening session in Ellsworth, Maine



A Place for Art

The Commission on the Arts is the Academy's first major programmatic effort focused on the arts and culture. At its center is the belief that the arts are essential to both individual and civic life and that artists are crucial to the functioning

and development of healthy communities.

Through research, data collection, and ongoing conversations, the Commission, formed in late 2018, is examining the role of the arts in American life. The national focus of the project is reflected in

the composition of its membership, which spans the cultural field and the geography of the United States; its members represent over a dozen states and more than forty organizations, disciplines, and institutions. This expansive group of experts, scholars, and practitioners is led by



co-chairs **John Lithgow**, actor and author; **Deborah Rutter**, President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; and **Natasha Trethewey**, Professor of English at Northwestern University and former Poet Laureate of the United States.

The Commission's work is centered around four working groups:

ARTS IN EDUCATION

Led by **Roberta Uno**, Director of Arts in a Changing America; and **Rod Bigelow**, Director of Crystal

Bridges Museum of American Art, the arts in education working group holds the value of arts access and learning as its central tenet and seeks to create an evidence-based, value-centered report that argues for the necessity of the arts in every student's education. The report will highlight existing inequities in access and illustrate the effects that the absence or presence of the arts in a child's formative years has on long-term indicators of happiness and well-being.

ARTS IN COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Led by **Laura Zabel**, Executive Director of Springboard for the Arts, the arts in community and economic development working group is examining both publicly and privately funded programs that support arts and culture initiatives at the national level. By researching and highlighting the opportunities that exist for artists to be embedded in community and economy-building programs, the group will offer recommendations and guidelines that foster greater equity in the field and increase the value that creative perspectives are granted in traditionally noncreative sectors.

ARTS IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Led by **Felix Padrón**, former Director of the Department for Culture and Creative Development in San Antonio, Texas, the arts in civic engagement working group seeks to advance and support the role of artists, arts organizations, funders, and community leaders in fostering civic dialogue. Committed to the idea of art's capacity to bridge divisions, the group's work will serve to empower artists, funders, and the public to build the connections necessary for the functioning of a healthy democratic society.



Vijay Gupta performs during a reception organized by the Academy to celebrate the arts.

ARTS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Led by Maribel Alvarez, Executive Director of the Southwest Folk Life Alliance at the University of Arizona, the arts in everyday life working group is building a bold, participatory campaign on how engaging with the arts – whether as a creator or enjoyer – adds meaning to individuals’ lives. Marrying data with anecdotal accounts of the arts’ significance on a personal level of engagement, the working group is striving to include as wide a cross section of perspectives as possible in order to demonstrate the variation and diversity of the roles that creative expression plays in day-to-day life.

Each of these working groups, building on the collective knowledge and experience of its members,

is generating research and recommendations that both reflect and strengthen the value of the arts and artists in American life. To facilitate this work, the Commission is also building partnerships with arts and culture organizations at local, regional, and national levels and will host virtual listening sessions that invite diverse audiences from across the country to provide the Commission with insights about the role of the arts in their communities. These conversations will provide greater understanding of the challenges facing arts organizations and artists, the ways in which those challenges may be mitigated, and the reasons creativity and art are necessary to the well-being of individuals and their wider communities.

The Commission has held a number of meetings to date. In May 2019, the Commission sponsored a

webinar on the *Sound Health* project, a collaborative program between the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Institutes of Health, in association with the National Endowment for the Arts. The webinar, “Music and the Mind,” explored the relationship between music and the brain and featured award-winning singer Renée Fleming (Kennedy Center’s Artistic Advisor at Large), Francis Collins (National Institutes of Health), Deborah Rutter (The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts), and Sunil Iyengar (National Endowment for the Arts).

In October 2019, the Commission hosted a conference on the integration of the arts, humanities, and STEM in higher education in partnership with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The program, “Branches



Dancers Ilya Vidrin and Jessi Stegall perform at the October 2019 conference, “Branches from the Same Tree.”

from the Same Tree: Conversations on the Integration of the Arts, Humanities, and STEM in Higher Education,” drew educators, researchers, and community arts leaders from across New England to the House of the Academy for a full day of presentations and discussion.

A second webinar, “New Developments in Rural Arts and Culture,” which focused on rural arts and culture programs, took place in late 2019 and featured leaders of rural area community organizations from across the country, including Matthew Fluharty (Art of the Rural), Michelle Ramos (Alternate ROOTS), Jonny Stax (Organizational Consultant and producer of Art-Farm), Kara Schmidt (Black Vulture Project and Paoli Fest), and Laura Zabel (Springboard for the Arts).

In addition to these outreach and learning engagements, the members

of the Arts Commission have met as a group on three occasions: in January 2019 in Cambridge; in June 2019 in New York; and in January 2020 in Los Angeles.

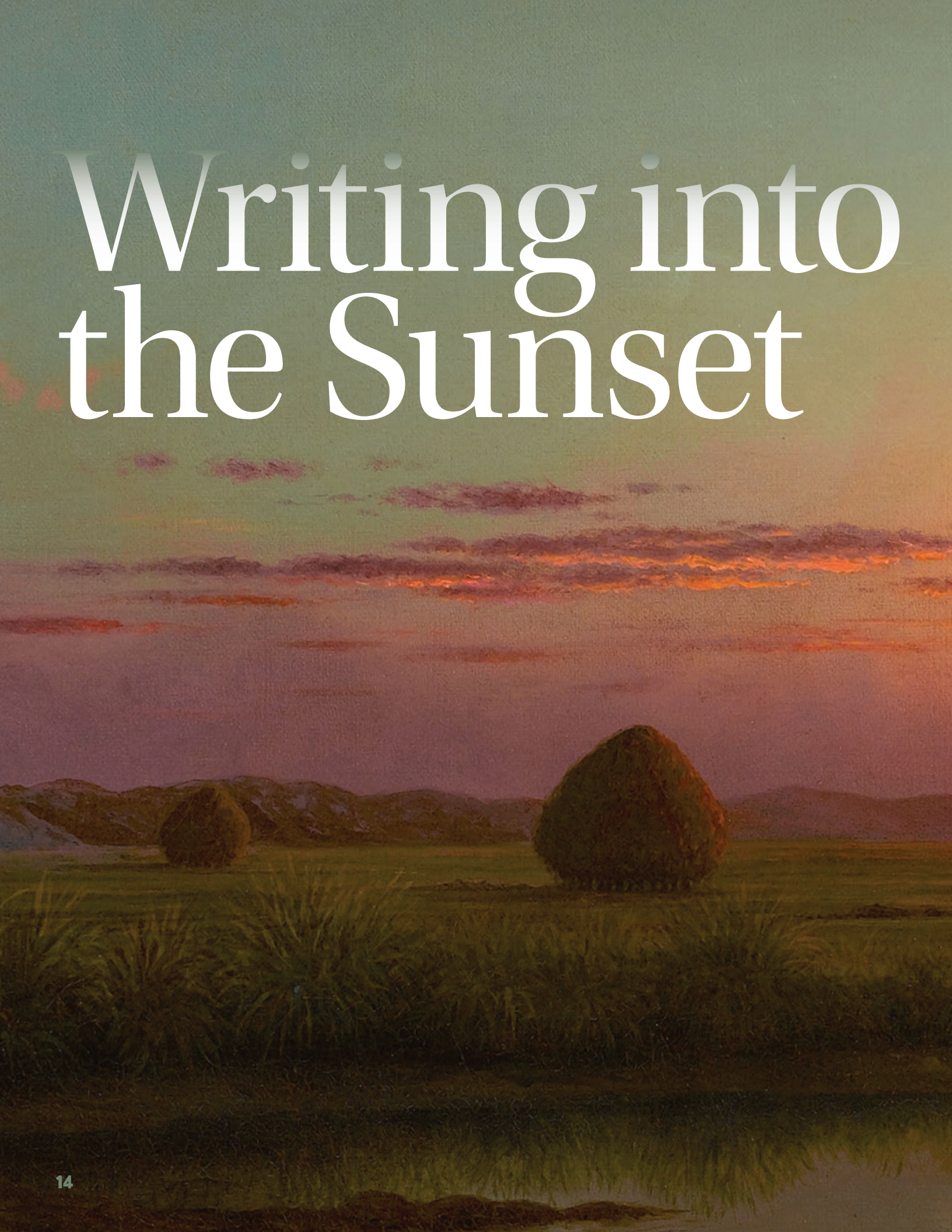
The meeting in Los Angeles included a special program that celebrated the arts and their contribution in shaping the city of Los Angeles. Mayor Eric Garcetti spoke about the capacity of the arts and culture to build connection and transform communities. He described the city’s history and deep roots in a diverse array of cultural traditions that continue to inform every aspect of life for Angelinos. The program also featured a poetry reading by former Poet Laureate of the United States and Commission co-chair Natasha Trethewey as well as a performance by Vijay Gupta, violinist, social justice advocate, and member of the Commission.

As the work of the Commission continues amidst the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, an appreciation of the arts’ indispensable role in our lives takes on new urgency. Recognizing the importance of the arts in offering us solace and hope during difficult times, but also how vulnerable the sector is in times of growing economic uncertainty, the Academy’s work aims to strengthen and support artists, arts education, and the arts in communities across the country.



For more on the Commission on the Arts, please visit www.amacad.org/project/commission-arts.

Writing into the Sunset



At an Academy event held in Seattle, Washington, author **Annie Proulx** described some surprising places her research has led : from accusations of plagiarism against Alfred, Lord Tennyson to obsessive lepidopterists and images of long-lost swamplands. Following her opening remarks, she joined **Shawn Wong**, professor of English, in conversation. An edited version of her presentation and discussion with Professor Wong follows.

2086th Stated Meeting | November 19, 2019 | University of Washington
Morton L. Mandel Public Lecture



Annie Proulx

Annie Proulx is the author of eight books, including the novel *The Shipping News* and the three-volume *Wyoming Stories* collection. Her most recent novel *Barkskins* is in production for a television series. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2014.



After years in Wyoming I have tried to adjust to the Pacific Northwest by getting involved in citizen science projects in Port Townsend. One day, I walked on the beach with a geologist friend who pointed out a dark layer of peat near the bottom of Fort Worden Feeder Bluff. The peat was compressed, she said, by the successive weight of several glaciers a hundred thousand years ago. I was interested in that flattened layer, but peatlands are complex and range across a continuum of identities from tidal marsh to fen, from fen to bog, from bog to swamp, and from swamp to parking lot or soybean field. The deeper I waded into the subject, the more I encountered side paths away from the main topic. A few of those are my subject tonight.

The Fens. I began with historian Eric Ash's book, *The Draining of the Fens*. These were the famous uninterrupted Fenlands along England's east coast. Ash's study showed how vested interests, political clout, and tailored legislation of the English

drainage projects obliterated a vast wetland and shaped a modern nation-state at the cost of its ancient ecology. Historians David Hall and John Cole in the English Heritage Fenland survey wrote that the Fens were a source of wealth that could hardly be surpassed by any other natural environment. But the important upland people who ran England in the sixteenth century would not have agreed. To them, wealth was measured not in eels and reeds but in income from dryland grain crops, cattle, sheep, and large-scale farming. Today, East Anglia, once prime Fenland, has monofarms of cereal grains and looks like the giant fields of the American Midwest and the Canadian Midwest.

A sound we will never hear is described in Charles Kingsley's 1873 *Prose Idylls*—bird gunners at Whittlesea Fen, where over the years hundreds of thousands of these birds were shot by market gunners. “Down the wind came the boom of the great stanchion gun and after that sound another sound, louder as it neared and overhead

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rushed and whirled the skeins of terrified wildfowl screaming, piping, clacking, croaking, filling the air with the hoarse rattle of their wings while clear above all sounded the wild whistle of the curlew and the trumpet note of the great wild swan. They are all gone now.”

Eric Ash often referred to the book *The Fenland, Past and Present*. I ordered a print-on-demand facsimile copy of the original, published in 1878 and written by meteorologist Samuel H. Miller and geologist Sydney B.J. Skertchly. This was the first descriptive history of the Fens. When the book arrived, I glanced through the subscribers' list hoping to find luminaries of the day. Darwin was still alive; he might have subscribed. Far down the list I saw the name of Alfred, Lord Tennyson followed by a black blotch. An inky pen had obliterated “poet laureate” and above the scratched-out words had written “plagiarist and ass” [*laughter*] in spiky anonymous strokes of his pen. Who wrote this? The author of the insult must have been the original owner, who never dreamed an entity called Google Books would lay it bare to future readers.

Since I knew nothing of the defacer but his strong masculine handwriting, I thought of him as the Acerbic Hand. I gave up the idea that he might be a jealous fellow poet. The Acerbic Hand objected to Tennyson's use of slant rhyme pairs such as “flats” and “cataracts.” He wanted balance both in sound and spelling and scrawled, “There never was a more effeminate, rotten-minded, milque-toast than plagiarist Tennyson.” The Acerbic Hand would have had a bad time with today's hip-hop and rap, where masters of slant rhyme reign. He put check marks beside the names of more than 250 butterflies and I wondered if he were a butterfly collector. That of course led me to nineteenth-century English lepidopterists. Christine Cheater, in her essay on collectors, wrote, “By the mid-nineteenth century the pursuit of nature had become a craze.” The feverish avidity of these collectors has been variously linked to the expansion of the British

Empire, romanticism, nationalism, the birth of the natural history museum, and interior decorating. A powerful example of the collector's passion is Alfred Russel Wallace's account of the first sight of *ornithoptera croesus*, aka the golden birdwing, a denizen of damp Indonesian forests. He wrote, “My heart began to beat violently, the blood rushed to my head. I felt much more like fainting than I have done when in apprehension of immediate death. I had a headache for the rest of the day.”

Among the collectors I found the ill-starred Genevieve Estelle Jones of Circleville, Ohio, who was born in 1847. The Jones family collected bird nests and eggs. The daughter, Genny, was gifted, extremely intelligent, and five foot ten-and-a-half inches tall at a time when the average man was five foot eight. The Jones family had often remarked on the absence of nests and eggs in Audubon's famous *Birds of America*. A still unidentified character enters this story. Genny had a beau, a man ten years older than she. They wanted to marry, but the beau was a binge drinker. Genny's father said that the beau had to stay sober for one year before he would allow a marriage. The beau failed the test miserably and parental permission for the marriage was not given. Genny was despondent until her father suggested that she should make the illustrated book of nests and eggs they had so often imagined, and that it should be rigorously and scientifically accurate. The first part of the book appeared in 1879 and it was a great success, but a month later Genny came down with typhoid fever and died at age thirty-two. The beau, blaming himself, committed suicide. Genny's beau, the never-identified drinker, diverted my interest to James Swan, the binge drinker from Boston who, to spare his family shame, went to the remote Olympic peninsula where he lived the rest of his life collecting tribal artifacts for the Smithsonian museum and drinking with his close friend, S'Klallam chief Chetzemoka. Of course, once on this track I wanted to find more nineteenth-century alcoholics who between bouts of staggering

drunkenness practiced various occupations with brilliance, but I returned to the peatlands.

Long before the glaciers melted and made the Fens, the area was low-lying forest. There was no English Channel and England was not an island, but the western edge of the huge land mass later known as Europe and Asia. The two-hundred-thousand-square-mile area between today's England and Eurasia existed as forests and wide plains. This was Doggerland, the lost country under the North Sea where people lived for millennia. But ten thousand years ago the glacial ice began to melt and by 6500 BC the North Sea crept slowly across the low ground until an underwater landslide known as the Storegga Slide of 6100 BC caused a mega tsunami that catastrophically flooded Doggerland. For centuries afterward Dutch fishermen hauled in pieces of trees, bones, flint, shells, and solid pieces of old peat they called moor log. Archaeologists became very alert when they identified bones from extinct hippos, mammoths, and mastodons. Then in 1931, the English trawler *Colinda*, fishing on Brown Bank, brought up the usual bottom debris of moor log, tree branches, bones, and something else. In a large block of peat there was a prehistoric antler object then believed to be a harpoon point but later identified as an agricultural tool. The antler point caught by the *Colinda* had a radiocarbon date of 11,740 BC plus or minus a few hundred years. Was Doggerland the elusive Mesolithic heartland long conjectured but never discovered? This was exciting but frustrating news. There were almost certainly submerged settlement sites under the North Sea that could not be explored.

Then in 2001, at the University of Birmingham, someone suggested that the seismic data piled up by oil and gas companies in their searches for fossil fuel deposits deep below the North Sea might help pierce the waters that covered Doggerland. During the weary months of trying various algorithms and data structures to tease out shallow water information, marine geophysics melded with archaeology. After a year they had a rough map of Doggerland's undersea features, including old coastlines, sand bars, low hills, and ancient rivers. In May 2019, the British and Belgian scientists on their research vessel located a drowned forest and possible traces of a settlement in the vicinity of Brown Bank. I am waiting to hear more.

Bogs. Back in 1965, *The Bog People*, a book by Danish archaeologist Peter Vilhelm Glob, told the story

of Iron Age corpses preserved in northern bogs for centuries. Many historians, archaeologists, psychologists, writers, and artists, including artist Joseph Beuys and poet Seamus Heaney, experienced a thread of connection to these ancient men and women exhumed from tannic peat, and ever since there has been a river of imaginative creative work on bog bodies. The speculation about the meanings and reasons humans were put in bogs started with Tacitus, who had no firsthand knowledge of the Germanic tribespeople. He wrote that these bodies were human sacrifices. "Cowards, shirkers, and sodomites are pressed down under a

“ Over the centuries we have learned that the spiritual beliefs of bog people were linked to sacred wetlands and forests. Anyone entering a bog for the first time immediately senses its strangeness. It is half water, half squelching ground where the unfamiliar combines with the unseen to intimidate. It is not difficult to believe that insatiable gods and demiurges still crouch beneath the black waters.

wicker hurdle into the slimy mud of a bog.” It is of course more complex than this bald statement. Over the centuries we have learned that the spiritual beliefs of bog people were linked to sacred wetlands and forests. Anyone entering a bog for the first time immediately senses its strangeness. It is half water, half squelching ground where the unfamiliar combines with the unseen to intimidate. It is not difficult to believe that insatiable gods and demiurges still crouch beneath the black waters.

Augustine Rome believed its legions were invincible. They had conquered many lands. In 7 AD, Germania, east of the Rhine, seemed ready for takeover, but the Romans did not really understand the bogs nor the people of northern Europe. During the rise of Rome's first emperor, Augustus, who worked hard at convincing Roman citizens

that the revered republic still existed, the Roman army suffered a humiliating and catastrophic defeat in northern Germany between a forested hill and the edge of the great bog. The complicated story defies a brief explanation but in 7 AD Augustus appointed General Publius Quinctilius Varus as governor of the homeland of several indigenous German tribes. It was Varus's job to set up the standard Roman administration in the new territory. Many German tribes had military experience with the Roman army as auxiliary fighters. One such man was Arminius of the Cherusci tribe. He may have been a child hostage raised in Rome and probably served in a Roman auxiliary force before returning to his tribal home on the Vaser River. Back home and full of malice, he recruited men to lay a trap. The battleground Arminius chose was a path through a narrow gap that lay between forested Kalkriese Hill and the sullen great bog. Arminius and his people modified it at the crucial place where the narrow footpath veered off to the left by digging away the main track and filling it in with brush and saplings. The cutaway sod became a disguised barricade above the skinny path at the base of Kalkriese Hill.

On the fatal day the Romans marched along the shrinking track. They were increasingly crowded together, treading on one another's heels, churning up the mud. To step off the pathway was to step into the foot-sucking bog. Arminius's men, hidden behind the turf wall, let many of the soldiers pass. Suddenly spears flashed into the bunched-up troops. Horses, mules, and men stumbled and slipped on the path or fell into the reddening bog. In only a few minutes, thousands of Romans fell. Roughly sixteen thousand Romans and about five hundred Germans died. In the next few days more than one thousand Roman soldiers were ritually killed on sacrificial altars or sacrificed to the bog. Weapons, coins, amulets, bells, and a silver-plated parade mask all went to the gods of the great bog. The old belief in humoring demons by tossing offerings into water lingers on today whenever we throw a coin into a wishing well.

Swamps. Ecologist/historian Oliver Rackham says the history of wetlands is written in their destruction. The fate of American swamps was to be drained. This has been our capitalist way. Even American novels such as Gene Stratton-Porter's *Girl of the Limberlost*, a favorite nature book in the early twentieth century, is the usual American story of taking something from nature for personal gain. The thirteen-thousand-acre Limberlost near Stratton-Porter's Indiana home was small but

still supported an encyclopedia of insects, including, as in the English Fens, rare moths and butterflies. Stratton-Porter's story championed Elnora who collected and mounted moths. After her first miserable day in high school, where she is scorned as an out-of-fashion backwoods hick, in the local bank window she sees a placard offering cash for moths and cocoons. Elnora needs money to buy nice clothes and cosmetics. She describes her moths to the birdwoman, author of the placard, who tells her, "Young woman, that's the rarest moth in America. If you have 100 of them that's worth \$100." And with that, Elnora is on her way to wealth, a career, a rich husband, and all the rest of it thanks to the corpses of the yellow emperor moth.

In real life, against Stratton-Porter's personal protests, the Limberlost was ruinously drained for farmland by steam-powered dredges from 1888 to 1910, but in the 1990s Indiana readers who valued Stratton-Porter's book bought up some of the original swamp acreage and with help from Ducks Unlimited and conservation groups restored part of the swamp. The yellow emperor moths are still around. They are not on endangered lists, though they are declining in number in part because they are said to be highly annoyed by streetlamps.

Statistics say that more than half of the original American wetlands have been drained for farmland. The Singer Tract of 120 square miles of virgin gum, oak, pine, pecan, and hackberry – the habitat of ivory-billed woodpeckers in northeast Louisiana – was one of the last virgin bottomland American forests. It held out until the 1940s when the forest was cut. A tragedy for the ivory-bill was the disappearance of the woodpecker's main sustenance, beetle larvae under the tree bark. Louisiana writer Tim Gautreaux's novel, *The Clearing*, details the cutting of a virgin cypress forest. This is probably the Okefenokee Swamp and not the Singer Tract, but one of the characters writes home to his father saying, "After the Gulf cypress is all cut out no one will ever know such lumber again."

As I learned more about peatland diversity, I began to change my ideas about many things. I used to think that stasis in the natural world was possible and desirable, especially with forests, but I have learned that such situations, like the balance of nature, are fantasies. Self-sustaining forests like the Białowieża straddling Poland and Belarus let us comfortably believe that nature left alone will self-regulate, but humans can no longer be left out of the workings of the natural world. A reason the so-called primeval Białowieża Forest with its giant oaks, hornbeams, and lindens, the last old forest

Shawn Wong

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in Europe, seems timeless is because for centuries it was part of the hunting grounds of princes, kings, emperors, and tsars. Commoners were forbidden to cut trees, break branches, gather firewood or plants. The forest was allowed to grow, die, fall, and rot naturally ensuring a good supply of mixed species seedlings. For hundreds of years it was a place where senescent fallen giants served as nurse logs returning their energies to the soil, a place where the relative lack of disturbance ensured a broad range of animals and birds for the hunting parties.

In recent years the geologically diverse forest became a World Heritage Site under the protection of UNESCO. In 2016, when the Polish government allowed logging operations in the preserve, there was a terrific public outcry. It was a shock to many to realize that the ancient forest was not invincibly self-sustaining, but like everything else on Earth – wetlands, rivers, grassy plains, polar ice in the ocean, the sky – all are transitional and all are at the mercy of human interference.

CONVERSATION

SHAWN WONG: Tonight’s presentation, “Writing into the Sunset,” is not about retirement but about what happens to writers when we’re writing a book and doing research and how we often find ourselves going into these obscure corners of research: following one tangent, then another tangent, and then another tangent. As we heard from Annie this evening, it can be a real luxurious time chasing information and facts and getting lost in some of those tangents.

ANNIE PROULX: Too true. The way I learn something is by reading and writing, so when I decided I wanted to learn how things were in the Pacific Northwest and I chose peatlands as my base study I certainly relished dashing off on some of these tangents. I wasn’t writing for publication. I wasn’t writing for anybody but myself so indeed I did have the time and inclination to follow strange leads. I think anybody who’s done any research

will have had exactly the same experience: you come across something that's unexpected, out of the blue, and you follow that for a while. I'm an omnivorous reader and have been all my life, and this is just more of the same: galloping off first in one direction and then another.

WONG: Many years ago I wrote a funny essay proposing the idea that American taxpayers have to write an essay to go along with their income tax return that justifies the things that they were writing off. If we were to go by that premise, Annie will be able to write off everything because of the sheer number of subjects that she brought up tonight. I have to admit that she sent me a list of subjects that she was going to address tonight in order to help me prepare, and I remember looking at the list and thinking oh my God, I know nothing about anything on this list! But I had time to prepare. And the interesting thing is that I followed her down those paths. Luckily there's a thing called Google where you can try to find your path. But I found myself doing the same thing: looking up bog, for example, and then getting fascinated by peat bogs and then of course whiskey and the influence of peat bogs on whiskey and things like that. And so I went on a slightly different path.

When you moved to the Northwest, you researched the area. What fascinated you or what drew you to the Northwest? You could pick anywhere in the country to live. A lot of your reasons for coming here had to do with the Elwha Dam and salmon and other natural resources that this area has.

PROULX: Yes. I was proud that the Elwha Dam came down and I thought that's got to be a great place with great people to make this happen. So that was a primary thought. And I was drifting westward. I lived for a while in Newfoundland, in New England, in Albuquerque and Santa Fe and for many years in Wyoming, and so it seemed natural just to come up to the Pacific Northwest. I have a son who went to university here and who is still here, so it was nice. At least there was somebody I knew in the area. And I ended up in Port Townsend to escape western red cedar trees to which I am very allergic. So that's a difficulty with this place for me because they really are everywhere and about the only place you can be to get away from them is on a boat quite far out to sea.

WONG: As an English professor I was fascinated by your mentioning of the Acerbic Hand, the

marginalia, and the attack on Tennyson as the "plagiarist and ass." What drew you to that line of research?

PROULX: It was so unexpected and so stark, and I really began to wonder who this person was. I formed a mental image of the proverbial gruff, insular, well-off English recluse who had some importance locally and maybe nationally. I kept hoping that as I read through the list of lepidopterists I would see a paragraph or a footnote somewhere that said, "Parson so and so near Wickham Fen was an ardent butterfly collector and disliked Tennyson." But that never happened. There were plenty of parsons after the butterflies and many of them dismayed me by writing how very unhappy they were that there were almost none of the such and such left anymore, except they did see one and of course they captured it. They couldn't stop, even knowing if it might be the very last one in the area. And so England lost many rare moths that way.

WONG: There's a comment in some of your notes to me in which you talk about the early nature book genre in American literature. I found this fascinating. The early books apparently were packed with invented animal behavior that was basically faking animal nature. Could you talk a little bit more about those kinds of narratives in that genre?

PROULX: This is really a fascinating thing. There was a great swell of interest in the natural world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Suddenly a lot of people were writing about wolves and rabbits and chipmunks and squirrels and birds and their songs and so forth. And everybody read these writings assiduously. My grandmother, who was born in the 1880s, as a schoolgirl planted trees in the schoolyard, which are now immense oaks. But everybody did something. My mother's family was very involved with this interest. But it (nature faking) became kind of a national scandal with cartoons and articles in the newspapers of the time. The chief players in the drama were John Burroughs, the naturalist who was born in the 1830s or so and was the grand old man of nature by the early part of the twentieth century. His bailiwick was a farm in Connecticut and what he really knew was a little piece of Connecticut. He wrote an article denouncing the nature fakers. Ernest Thompson Seton and William Long were the other players. In the middle of all of this, President Roosevelt became involved. He was considered a great authority on animals. Things came to a head

when Burroughs accused Long of being utterly ignorant of animal behavior. Long had said that he had seen a woodcock with packed clay around its broken leg. The woodcock has a lovely long bill, so this was physically possible, but Burroughs said it was absolutely impossible. Burroughs' view was that animals cannot think; they only act instinctively. Roosevelt also said it was absolutely impossible, and so it went. Poor old Long went down in disgrace. It more or less ruined his life to the point where he was becoming blind. Poor guy. In the end, Long was denounced and Ernest Thompson Seton escaped and made friends with Burroughs again. In recent months I have come across very interesting articles on a bird, not a woodcock but another bird, a seabird I think, that had a broken leg and somehow bound the leg with thin strips of grass and then packed clay around it. It was photographed and it has been verified by scientists. So Long was correct and Burroughs and Roosevelt were not. I rather like that. Somebody should write a lovely book about this. It was quite a war. It went on for years, the fight between the so-called nature fakers who are now finding that what they saw is being verified.

WONG: One of the other fascinating things that you mentioned are the bog bodies or the bog corpses. You noted that artists and poets have taken up the bog people as subject matter. Could you expand on that? In what manner do they write about the bog people?

PROULX: Seamus Heaney is the most famous writer of bog people. His collection, *North*, which played a large part in the prize from the Swedish Academy, is about the bog people. One can take particular pleasure in the poem where he celebrates the beauty of this young woman who was laid into the bog. Unfortunately, it turned out that more recently the young woman has been declared to have been a young man. So that kind of takes the gloss off the poem, but Heaney didn't know that, and the work is lovely. I'm sure many of you know the *North* collection. I can't say a lot about it, but rereading those poems and looking at the art that has been done about the bog finds is quite something. People invest themselves in these bodies. There is something about them that's absolutely compelling, but at the same time they've been rather badly treated, for example, in museum displays that try hard to be tasteful and are not always.

You can go into the gift shop and buy a mug with Tollund Man's squashed face on the side or a shopping bag or something. So it's quite disrespectful, but that's the world.

WONG: Since you have moved to the Pacific Northwest, besides the subject matter that you're obviously researching concerning this area, does being here influence your writing in the same way that living in Wyoming influenced your writing there?

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PROULX: No. Not yet. I don't know the place yet. I don't have a feel for it and maybe it's the red cedar, I don't know. I'm trying, but I have a lot to learn and there is a huge amount of information here. If you just start to look at kelp, you can quite quickly get lost. The needs of kelp, the importance of kelp, migrants coming from Asia and following along the coastland, following the kelp trail, the importance of estuaries for kelp. It's fascinating. And clams, I mean the oysters of yesteryear that are slowly being recovered and put back here. Invasive species. Everything is connected and you can't do it all, so I end up feeling smothered and that's why I decided I would just look at peatlands, keep it narrow.

WONG: Obviously you have been researching kelp too.

PROULX: Yes. And clams.

WONG: And clams, right. Have you been clam digging?

PROULX: No, I haven't.

WONG: Do you see increasing numbers of women writing as naturalists compared to classical naturalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? If so, how may that reshape our view of the natural world?

PROULX: That's a lovely question. Yes, I do see more women writing. There's a marvelous writer and I cannot think of her name, *Braiding Sweetgrass*? Does anyone know that writer? [Robin Wall Kimmerer] There are more women doing scientific work, writing, examining, looking at things. I have a friend who is on his way to Antarctica right now, and I was watching a French series on Antarctica recently and they're all guys. It's pretty interesting. It's hard. Women have a long way to go in some of these sciences, but the writers are there, the sensibilities are there. Ellen Meloy was a particular favorite of mine. She had an easy, slangy, edgy way of writing about the Southwest. I think she lived in Utah. She died quite young a few years ago. She's worth finding out about. A marvelous writer. Quite acid and feisty and she don't take no shit. [laughter]

WONG: Let me ask you a question from the audience. "As you venture down these paths of research, do the online resources cause you to go further on these tangents because of the ease of doing that research online or are you still mostly a reader?"

PROULX: I'm a book person. I have been since I was four. That means for eighty years I've been a book person. I've been reading a long time.

WONG: Our next question. Some of your penmanship, folks, needs to be better. [laughter]

PROULX: I deciphered the Acerbic Hand, so let me see that. Hmm. "In Jeanne Achterberg's book titled *Woman as Healer*, bog bodies were found that suggested male sacrifice possibly from a pre-patriarchal era. Any thoughts about this?" I have not had any thoughts about it until this moment, but I will from now on. [laughter]

WONG: Do you know about Washington's law that allows human composting?

PROULX: I have heard of it, but I have no personal experience with it yet. [laughter]

WONG: Now that's a good answer. In fact, that's a better punchline than the rest of the question. You

say that in nature, stasis is a fantasy, but isn't that what modern-day polluting robber barons want to hear? Isn't it complicated politically?

PROULX: Well, they don't see it quite the way I do. I see it as never-ending change. For millennia things have been constantly shifting and changing and shifting and changing. We tend to think that things in our own lifetime are the way things are and always were and always should be, but no. Getting yourself to think of being on a conveyor belt of time is more what I'm getting at rather than just tossing up my hands and saying oh, everything changes, so what? It's not quite what the robber barons have in mind.

WONG: Have you done a lot of research on Charles Darwin during this particular line of research? I know you mentioned Darwin a little bit in your remarks.

PROULX: No, but he keeps popping up because he was such an interesting person. I always liked the story about when he was a young kid, he was a collector and his thing was beetles. There are more beetles on Earth than you would imagine, and Darwin was bound to have every single one. And one day he was in a good beetle spot and he spied a beetle that was his heart's desire, grabbed it in one hand and then his eye fell on another one that was a different species but equally desirable. He grabbed it in the other hand. And then a third beetle appeared, and it was rare and splendid and he had to have it. So he took the first beetle and popped it in his mouth . . .

WONG: Oh my God.

PROULX: . . . and reached for the third one at the same moment that the beetle in his mouth let go with a squirt of acid that turned him inside out. So he dropped all of the beetles and had none. That's my Darwin story for the night. [laughter]

WONG: I also have a Darwin story. I remember when I was a grad student, I was doing research on Thomas Hardy. When Thomas Hardy was at the height of his popularity Darwin asked the Royal Academy to pass a law outlawing sad endings.

PROULX: What?

WONG: True story. Thomas Hardy's books had these tragic endings.

PROULX: He was thinking of beetles.

WONG: So he tried to apply a Darwinian evolutionary theory to the romantic Victorian and outlaw the sad ending. Let's keep Darwin out of our fiction. Here's another question. "How does writing connect us to a place in a different way than reading about or drawing or photographing a place?"

PROULX: Because you're dealing with words, which are slippery and shifty themselves, getting it right is a lot harder than you might think unless you've tried it. Describing a place in words is fiendishly difficult because you have to pick your time because things change. If I wanted to describe a pocosin in the South fifty years ago it would be quite different from describing it today, where it's probably part of a highway. So yes, it's difficult. It's hard, but it's not the same as a photograph. Speaking of the South, there was a biologist with the Bureau of the Interior named Brooke Meanley. Bird people may know his name. He was an authority on Swainson's warbler back in the day, and he worked in the South in the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and right up until almost the 1970s. He was a very good writer. He wrote about the birds of the South and their disappearance. He had a camera, and the photographs that Brooke Meanley took fifty or sixty years ago are of places and things we can never see because they are now gone. But his books are still out there, and you can buy them on AbeBooks quite inexpensively. For people who are interested in how it was in this country Brooke Meanley is someone to be reckoned with. I'm hoping somebody someday writes a good biography of him.

WONG: During your talk you described a frenzy for collecting specimens and artifacts from the natural world as an era-defining trend. Do you see similar trends today – travel and tourism, for example? What do you think drives our desire to collect, to see, to travel comprehensively?

PROULX: Ideas for interior decoration, of course. [laughter] Ecotourism is huge but the continued trashing of habitats with electric bicycles so you can go up steep trails more effortlessly and encroaching without knowing it on ungulate migration routes is ruining it for the animals that live there. Migration routes are endangered. Wyoming has a big problem with its elk migrations

now. Highways. Being able to cross Route 80 if you're an elk is bad. So the state has built one or two overpasses. Elk do not like underpasses. They don't like to go into dark tunnels, but overpasses work. They're expensive but if Wyoming wants to keep its elk and other ungulates it has to have those overpasses. But it's the same all over. Our roads are intruding on migration routes. Every part of the natural world that we look at has a problem and the solutions are so hard to find. I'm sure everybody here has a story of something that they've noticed that isn't like it used to be and that needs fixing, but how do we fix it?

WONG: When we talked earlier, you asked me if I knew a Tennyson scholar.

PROULX: Yes.

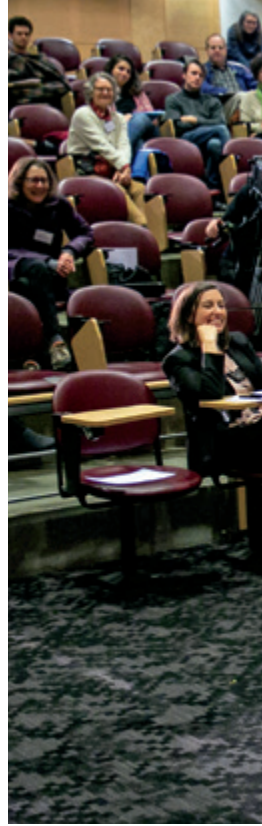
WONG: Because you had some questions?

PROULX: I have the question about who that fellow was.

WONG: We happen to have a Tennyson scholar in the audience, so you can ask your question. Would Charles LaPorte please stand?

CHARLES LAPORTE: I'm so sorry. I don't have the answer to your question. It's almost impossible with marginalia to track down who the Acerbic Hand was that was responsible for that writing. Because you give the date of *The Fenland, Past and Present* as 1878, we can say pretty clearly that the person with their claims of plagiarism is probably referring to the poet Alfred Austin's attacks on Tennyson in the *Temple Bar* in 1875. He calls Tennyson a plagiarist, says he's never going to be any good as a poet, that he is totally overrated. Austin had a professional interest. I'm probably the only person in this room who's read any Alfred Austin. He became laureate immediately after Tennyson, in part because the government wanted to reward him for some jingoistic poetry that he had written on behalf of the English side in the Boer War.

The other thing that I would say is that the whole effeminate milquetoast thing, then as now, was leveled at any male poet whom you can name unless they were super conspicuously masculine like Browning. If they were over-the-top masculine, then you didn't call them a milquetoast. You





mentioned the curate somewhere in the north who collected butterflies and hated Tennyson in the Fenlands. He wrote a poem called “The Northern Farmer” that attacks his neighbors as crass and interested only in money and accumulating property. The refrain is “Property, property, property.” It’s about a farmer who’s telling his son that he shouldn’t marry the woman that he loves because he can marry this other person whom he doesn’t like but whose parents are loaded. There are arguably a number of well-off people who might not like Tennyson for that reason.

PROULX: Thank you. Of course everyone here is free to search for that Acerbic Hand.

I think it’s pretty clear that he was a local because of the comments throughout the book about places. He would say, “There never was a path behind the college.” I think Wickham Fen was his favorite and he often checked off references to it in the book. It does drag you away from the text to see that marginal hand scrawling its way along. It’s pretty interesting.

WONG: Let me ask one more question. How does your writing voice change when it is private versus public-facing?

PROULX: Do you mean writing for oneself or writing for publication?

WONG: For presentation.

PROULX: Writing privately, it’s not so brief. Brevity has to be forced by the whip, but if I’m just writing for myself, I can be discursive and go anywhere I want. Does that dodge the question?

WONG: I think it does. Do you have anything you want to say to wrap up?

PROULX: Yes.

WONG: What would that be?

PROULX: I think it’s good for people who came to listen to someone babble to leave with at least a word that’s new and interesting to them. So I have a word for you. It’s a fen word

from the old days when the fens were fens: it’s *fizmer*, and it’s the sound that reeds and grasses make in a light wind. That might be useful to you. [laughter]

WONG: And one more thing that you’ve mentioned to me is that birds sleep as they fly.

PROULX: Yes, but we all know that, right? Tim Dee, an English writer of parts, wrote a very lovely book called *Four Fields*. He lives in the drained land of the Fens, so he’s lower than sea level and he’s been fascinated by the Fens all of his life. He’s a very good writer. His book was published, I think, in 2015. He first mentioned that birds sleep while they fly, and in fact the Max Planck ornithology department fastened devices to seabirds to measure their brain waves as they migrated. The data were collected after they had landed and it was found that, yes, birds can shut off half of their brains as they fly and keep flying for short periods of time. So it’s like taking little naps as you fly along. And then a friend that I was telling this said, “Well, whales can do the same thing.” So it’s something to strive for, I guess. [laughter]

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To view or listen to the presentation, visit www.amacad.org/events/writing-sunset-evening-annie-proulx



Arms Trafficking

Its Past, Present, and Future

2087th Stated Meeting | November 20, 2019 | University of California, Berkeley
Morton L. Mandel Public Lecture



Arms trafficking has a long and influential history. At an Academy event held in Berkeley, California, historian **Brian DeLay** described how U.S. arms trafficking intervened at critical moments to destabilize Mexican governance. The program, hosted by the Berkeley Local Program Committee and moderated by **David Hollinger**, included commentary from historians **Priya Satia** and **Daniel Sargent**, as well as from political scientist **Ron Hassner**. The presentations explored how the history of arms trading may help to better understand the history of state-making and the power relations between the United States and the rest of the world. Edited transcripts of the presentations follow.

Brian DeLay

Brian DeLay is Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. His publications include the award-winning book *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* and the monograph *Aim at Empire: Arms Trading and the Fates of American Revolutions*.



I am going to begin with something that will not surprise you: the United States is the arsenal to the world. I had initially planned on speaking about U.S. arms trading over the long term, and I wanted to root that discussion in a broader conversation about the connection between the U.S. government and the private arms industry, which has been present and essential to the American arms industry since the Revolution. Part of the reason I thought that would be interesting is that the gun lobby has invested enormous resources in convincing the public that the government is the enemy of the arms business instead of its historic and indispensable patron. But as I began to plan this talk, I kept seeing disturbing news from Mexico that was very relevant to tonight's topic. For example, a month ago a military unit from the Sinaloa cartel used .50 caliber M2 machine guns and other military-grade weapons to free the son of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, the jailed Mexican kingpin, from state custody, a profoundly

humiliating and disturbing event for the Mexican government. The weapons they used almost certainly came from the United States.

Two weeks ago, cartel hitmen murdered three women and six children from a single Mormon family. The cartel hitmen left behind hundreds of shell casings made by Remington, a U.S. arms manufacturer. Asked about the role of U.S. arms trafficking in these awful events, an official with the ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives) said, “This is an ongoing problem. It’s been with us for a while.”

As a nineteenth-century historian I can attest to that fact. With the possible exception of Haiti, Mexico has had a longer and more destabilizing relationship with American guns than any country in the world. There’s an old saying in Mexico, “Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States.” The country’s two-thousand-mile-long land border with the hemisphere’s pre-eminent arms manufacturer and exporter has

hardwired instability into Mexican history. In my brief remarks this evening, I hope to convince you of this state of affairs by taking you on a very quick tour through Mexico's nineteenth-century history and explaining how U.S. arms trafficking intervened at critical moments in that history to destabilize Mexican governance.

With the possible exception of Haiti, Mexico has had a longer and more destabilizing relationship with American guns than any country in the world. ”

Before I get to that history, let me say something about how the buyers in this story acquired the weapons that they used to pursue their political projects. One method was to pay outright with gold or silver, or with bills, cotton, horses, and sometimes slaves. Others, particularly governing elites and well-connected purchasers looking to buy in bulk, paid with bonds, with loans, or with vaguer kinds of promises about what they would do once they took power. Political scientist Michael Ross, a specialist in conflict in post-Cold War Africa, refers to the market for such promises as “booty futures.” He notes that this is a particularly destabilizing kind of finance precisely because it empowers the weak and the disconnected to do things that they otherwise would not have the power to do and probably wouldn't even try if they didn't have that support. Booty futures figure prominently into the story that I'm going to share with you tonight. Finally, a warning. Mexico's misfortunes in the nineteenth century were so profound and so numerous as to almost defy belief. But I promise I am not making any of this up. In fact, I'm actually leaving out many traumatic things that happened in nineteenth-century Mexico.

Let's begin with the Mexican War of Independence. This was a longer, bloodier, far more destructive war than the American Revolution. It lasted from 1810 until 1821. Among many other places in what had been New Spain and what was going to become the independent republic of Mexico, the war had devastating consequences for the underpopulated province of Texas. Mexican insurgents struggled to capture seaports and therefore understood that their best chance of arming

the insurgency was to acquire a border with the United States. So there was fierce fighting over the land border between Texas and Louisiana. Crown officials, not wanting to see this happen, invested significant resources in stopping that project, causing Texas to be torn to pieces during those ten years. Its already small population was cut almost in half and its animal wealth, which was really the main economic enterprise in Texas at the time, all but collapsed.

Now the reason this is an important story to share, first of all, is just as a measure of the antiquity of the U.S. arms trafficking problem and the U.S.-Mexican relationship. But, more importantly, the story is relevant because the devastation in Texas from 1810 to 1821 prompts the new independent republic, once Mexico achieves independence in 1821, to make a very critical decision. It decides that in order to hold onto this territory it has to populate it, and that the most efficient way to do that is to invite Anglo-American settlers from the United States into Texas.

Now, at the same time that the government made that fateful decision it was trying to figure out how to arm and defend itself as an independent postcolonial state. Mass-producing arms domestically was too complex and expensive, so that was not an option – certainly not in the short term and not even by the early twentieth century. It was just too difficult, partly because the technological horizon in the nineteenth century was racing forward too quickly for Mexico to ever catch up. Broke and exhausted from its long war for independence, Mexico lacked the cash necessary to buy new arms on the open market from one of the major global producers at the time. So, in the mid-1820s, Mexico secures two major loans from prominent banks in London that are guaranteed by two-thirds of all the country's customs receipts, which were really its only reliable source of income at that moment. Almost all of these loans are converted immediately into used war material, things left over from the Napoleonic wars, such as four frigates, five thousand pistols, four thousand carbines, and seventy thousand East India Pattern “Brown Bess” muskets.

This was supposed to be the beginning of a prolonged arms campaign that would gradually build up state capacity over the coming decades. But the Mexican government would not secure another arms deal this large for the rest of the century. Just three years after making the deal with these London banks, Mexico defaults on its payments. Mexico would in fact spend the next sixty years

in sovereign default, more or less barred from international capital markets and in a very unstable condition. Because it was barred from international capital markets and because it didn't have adequate revenue, Mexico is unable to finance even the basic tasks of central government, causing it to be terrifically unstable over the course of most of the nineteenth century. I'll give you just one metric. In the thirty-five years between 1821 and 1856, Mexico had fifty-three separate governments operating under four different constitutional systems. So just an absolute churn of political turmoil.

For a generation Mexico's leaders would face one crisis after another with an already outmoded and dwindling arsenal. The inadequacy of that arsenal was tested in the mid-1830s in Texas. Here we get back to those Texans I was talking about a moment ago. Over the previous fifteen years, the Anglo-American colonists and African slaves Mexico had invited into Texas arrived in greater numbers than Mexico had anticipated and in far greater numbers than Mexico even wanted. Indeed, in 1830, in a panic, Mexico criminalizes further immigration from the United States into Mexico. Unsurprisingly American immigrants ignore this prohibition and Anglo-American "illegals" continue to come into Mexico, bringing enslaved men, women, and children with them in contravention of Mexican law. In 1835, the colonists rebel against the central government.

Now, rebellions had happened in Mexico before. Other larger, more powerful states had rebelled against the central government and in each case the central government had handily put down the rebellion. So why did the Texans think that they could do better? They were confident, but that doesn't really explain it. They didn't have the number of men, the weapons, or the money that the state of Zacatecas had, for example. And Zacatecas's rebellion was completely crushed by the central government. So why did Texas think it could succeed? Well, Texas had two advantages that Zacatecas did not. It shared a land border with the United States, and it had an increasingly precious booty future, namely, cotton land. The Texan authorities pursued desperate land for arms deals. The most consequential were deals made in New Orleans by Texas agents who had been authorized to offer up to one and a quarter million acres of prime cotton land in exchange for war material.

To defeat the Mexican army in 1836, the Texans relied on the arms, ammunition, and even some men from Louisiana.

While this was unfolding, arms trafficking was helping to produce yet another catastrophe in northern Mexico. Mexico had title to a sprawling northern territory, what's now the American West, but at the time most of that territory was controlled by indigenous polities. For complex reasons, the uneasy peace that Mexico had enjoyed with the Comanches, Apaches, Kiowas, Navajos, and other native peoples collapses in the 1830s. Armed with guns and ammunition obtained from other native people who themselves had obtained them from American agents or American merchants, mounted indigenous warriors began launching raiding campaigns across the whole of

“ In 1848, at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War, Mexico was not only less than half the size it had been when it achieved independence, but it was internally fractured, it was groaning under vast internal and international debts, and it was as gun-poor as it had ever been in its postcolonial history.

northern Mexico. Over the next decade these campaigns claimed thousands of Mexican and native lives, depopulated vast swaths of northern Mexico, and wrecked the ranching economy that was the mainstay for the entire north of the country. Raiders paid for their guns with stolen mules, stolen horses, and Mexican captives. They were able to traverse nine Mexican states because almost always they were far better armed than the Mexicans they encountered.

Mexico's harried government by the late 1830s and early 1840s promised to conquer los indios bárbaros, as they called these raiders, and to reconquer Texas. These were empty promises. Mexico's army was in terrible shape by the mid-1840s,

with a dwindling number of outmoded guns, about thirty-three thousand according to the minister of war. They had some 635 cannons of various calibers, most of which dated from the colonial period. The fact that this arsenal was unequal to the national task became agonizingly clear in 1846 when the United States invaded Mexico and provoked the Mexican-American War. After every successful battle the far better armed U.S. forces seized and destroyed the weapons they captured from their defeated Mexican adversaries. After his victory at the Battle of Cerro Gordo, for example, General Winfield Scott determined that the four thousand muskets seized from the conquered Mexican army that day were all far too substandard for his men to use. So he had the muskets destroyed.

Some in Mexico wanted to continue fighting the United States even after Mexico City itself was occupied by U.S. troops, but it's not at all clear how the state could have possibly waged that war. In the spring of 1848, Mexico's shocked minister of war reported that government stores contained only 48 functioning cannons and a mere 121 muskets for the whole country. The United States insisted that Mexico surrender more than half of its national territory as a precondition for ending the war. Here is the great cataclysm of nineteenth-century Mexican history. In 1848, at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War, Mexico was not only less than half the size it had been when it achieved independence, but it was internally fractured, it was groaning under vast internal and international debts, and it was as gun-poor as it had ever been in its postcolonial history. But this state of affairs was not going to last very long. Just several years after its war with the United States, Mexico plunged into a destructive civil war between liberals and conservatives known as the War of Reform.

In early 1861, only months after the War of Reform comes to an end, Mexico was once again invaded by a powerful foreign enemy. Seizing on Mexico's unpaid debts and the fact that the United States was distracted by its own civil war, France invaded Mexico in 1861 and soon thereafter installed a European prince as Emperor Maximilian the First. Mexico's liberal government, led by Benito Juárez, steadily lost ground and in 1865 Juárez fled to Texas. Now, the one good thing about being driven out of your country and being forced into Texas is that you are in close proximity to a lot of guns. Juárez followed a pattern that by then had become well established. He sent agents

out to dozens of American cities and helped them sell millions of dollars' worth of Mexican government bonds at desperately discounted prices. The agents found very prominent buyers. The list of Mexico's erstwhile patrons in 1865 and 1866 reads like a who's who of America's incipient gilded age. It included J.P. Morgan, William Aspinwall, Anson Phelps, Moses Taylor, and the country's most powerful arms dealer, Marcellus Hartley.

These investors provided the money and the material necessary to equip the liberal reconquest of Mexico. The bill for all of these loans and this material started coming due in 1867 as soon as Juárez and his forces took Mexico City, captured Maximilian, and then executed him. The bond holders, in New York City primarily, hatched a multitude of business schemes in Mexico over the following months. And I think this was in fact the purpose of scooping up all of these discounted Mexican bonds to begin with. Mexico had absolutely earned its reputation for financial insolvency. The idea that these savvy, extremely powerful capitalists would buy these bonds expecting prompt repayment was absurd. They bought these bonds because they knew that doing so would give them leverage over things that they regarded as far more important and promising in Mexico. This included things such as land deals, mining concessions, commercial privileges, and above all by the mid-1860s and early 1870s, railroad contracts, where the real money was. Juárez did a fair job trying to hold these creditors at bay, until his death in 1872.

Thereafter, pressure mounted on his ally and successor, Sebastián Lerdo. Like Juárez, Lerdo was a proud nationalist. He did not have the means to pay back these bonds, not in the time scale that the creditors demanded, and he certainly had no intention of handing U.S. creditors the economic keys of the kingdom. In 1875, after beating his rival Porfirio Díaz in that year's presidential election, Lerdo canceled all of the contracts for outstanding U.S. railroads. He also rejected a bilateral trade agreement that had been seen by these creditors as their last best hope of ever getting their money back. In 1876 the bondholders conspired with their stymied colleagues in the railroad business to help Díaz depose Lerdo in a coup. The bondholders sent Díaz \$320,000 in cash through an intermediary, and arms and ammunition soon began arriving in bulk at the Texas border, where Díaz was waiting. Thus equipped, Díaz deposed Lerdo and soon won election to the presidency. Relying on these foreign partners and

others whom he cultivated as well as on massive amounts of foreign investments, Díaz would go on to build an effective and extremely well-armed dictatorship. He would control the country for about thirty-three years.

There is a crooked but unbroken line between Mexico's frantic scramble for arms in the 1850s and the 1860s on one hand, and the rise of Díaz's dictatorship on the other. Coups were nothing new in Mexico by this time, but the direct and the decisive influence of American capital in toppling an elected government abroad: that was novel. As Juárez and Lerdo well understood, all they needed were the investments that gave American businessmen the sense of entitlement necessary to intervene in foreign governance. In Mexico's case, those investments had their modest but indispensable beginnings with the arms trade.

Díaz transformed Mexico. His rule was marked by rapid development, savage inequality, and foreign ownership of broad swaths of the economy. He cooperated with the United States to do something that governments, Mexican governments in particular, had failed to do for decades: conquer the Comanches, the Apaches, the Yaquis, and other powerful native people who had defied state power for so long. These conquests paved the way for unprecedented economic investment in the borderlands. Díaz finally fell from power during the Mexican revolution in 1910, a revolution equipped with arms from the United States. In other words, his very success helped lay the groundwork for his eventual overthrow.

With native people conquered, merchants in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California now had the capital, the connections, and the transportation infrastructure necessary to channel war material from its production sites in eastern North America, including Connecticut and upstate New York, to borderland buyers in virtually unlimited quantities. Moreover, the proliferation of huge mining, ranching, and agricultural enterprises south of the border, almost all of them American owned, gave revolutionaries like Pancho Villa abundant targets from whom to extort or plunder cash, crops, and cattle – things that could be traded for war material just north of the border. Even today the most recognizable icon of the Mexican Revolution is a fighting man or woman dressed in American-made ammunition. Throughout the 1910s, American arms and ammunition poured

into Mexico in unprecedented quantities. For enterprising merchants in the Southwest it was the great bonanza of their lifetimes. They supplied all comers with war material of every description.

One of the most notorious examples of this nondiscriminatory ethic came from the huge El Paso arms and hardware firm, Krakauer Zork & Moye. The firm once sold the federales one thousand kilometers of barbed wire and then immediately turned around and offered their rivals, the constitutionalists, all the wire cutters that they had in stock. Arms trafficking attracted citizens of prominence as well as merchants. In 1911, Laredo's former mayor, Amador Sánchez, got caught using the county jail as a depot for weapons destined to be smuggled into revolutionary Mexico. Why did Sánchez have access to the jail? Well, in addition to being president of the Webb County School Board, he was also the county sheriff. He later received a presidential pardon for his violation of U.S. neutrality laws and kept both of his jobs.

“ There is a crooked but unbroken line between Mexico's frantic scramble for arms in the 1850s and the 1860s on one hand, and the rise of Díaz's dictatorship on the other. Coups were nothing new in Mexico certainly by this time, but the direct and the decisive influence of American capital in toppling an elected government abroad: that was novel.

The Mexican Revolution was an incredible business opportunity for arms dealers across the borderlands. When it finally grinds to a halt around 1920, it left absolute wreckage in its wake. More than one million people died because of war-related casualties in that decade. Gun violence, of course, continues at lower levels in Mexico when the war ends. But it has once again become a massive crisis over the past several years. We are living in a time when U.S. arms trafficking is again posing a first-order problem for the Mexican state.

Guns are not difficult to acquire in Mexico. The large majority of them are smuggled in from the United States. By 2012, there were some 6,700 licensed U.S. arms dealers in the border region. That's more than three licensed arms dealers for every mile of the U.S.-Mexican border. ”

Let me close with a few words about how this nineteenth-century scourge has returned to afflict Mexico in the twenty-first century.

The violence that is affecting so much of Mexico really starts in 2006. Following a disputed election, Mexico's newly installed president, Felipe Calderón, declared war on his country's drug cartels and deployed the army against them in several sites around the country. The pressure that the Mexican state brought to bear sparked an intense and vicious competition between cartels for territory and for transportation routes into the United States. Gun violence soared across much of the country despite the fact that it is legally very difficult to purchase firearms in Mexico. In the entire country there is a single store where civilians may purchase firearms, and the army decides who can and cannot shop there. Nonetheless, guns are not difficult to acquire in Mexico. The large majority of them are smuggled in from the United States. By 2012, there were some 6,700 licensed U.S. arms dealers in the border region. That's more than three licensed arms dealers for every mile of the U.S.-Mexican border. A recent study suggests that straw buyers, people who ostensibly buy for themselves but are in fact doing so for others, shopping at these borderlands arms stores and elsewhere in the country purchased about a quarter million guns in 2012 alone to smuggle into Mexico.

The media doesn't pay nearly enough attention to this phenomenon, but when it does it usually concentrates on the guns alone. And yet ammunition is at least as important, and it is far less regulated than guns are. Because ammunition is not a permanent commodity like guns, it is all the more critical that it be obtained in bulk, which is easy enough to do in the United States. By the end of Calderón's term in 2012, his drug war had gone spectacularly wrong. Understandably, he wanted others with whom he could share the blame. He identified plausible villains in the U.S. arms industry and in the United States who had not done nearly enough to regulate the arms trade. Calderón went to Ciudad Juárez, which was probably the most dangerous place on Earth by 2012,

and used three tons of confiscated American guns to make a massive sign that read, "No More Weapons!" He erected the sign near a bridge connecting El Paso to Ciudad Juárez. It was a stark protest against the so-called "iron river of guns" flowing from the United States into Mexico.

Juárez's mayor never liked the sign. Perhaps he thought it was bad for tourism, or maybe he thought that the message had already been well received. So he removed the sign. But the problem has only deepened in the years since the sign was taken down. In 2018, Mexico's homicide rate set an all-time record, surpassing the previous high reached in 2017. And 2019 is on pace to surpass 2018. Gun violence accounts for about 70 percent of all the homicides in Mexico today, and the country's national security minister recently stated that on average two thousand guns go illegally across the border into Mexico every day to fuel this violence. If he's right, that would be about three times as many guns as the figure I cited just a few moments ago.

So I think the "No More Weapons!" sign needs to go back up. Versions of it should be placed at every crossing point along the border, all two thousand miles of it. Too few Americans realize how consequential U.S. gun laws are for Mexico and for Mexicans. When we allowed our national assault weapons ban to expire in 2004, gun violence increased in northern Mexico. Lax regulation of ammunition purchases in many states, in particular Arizona, makes it too easy for cartels to buy in bulk and smuggle in what they need. The gun lobby with their Republican allies in Congress have hobbled the ATF in ways that have significant implications for Mexico. And the so-called gun show loophole in this country that permits gun sales without background checks facilitates straw purchases that fuel cartel violence.

In other words, Calderón's plaintive sign captures a basic fact that is as true today as it was in the nineteenth century: The people with most leverage over the problem of arms smuggling into Mexico read English.



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COMMENTARY

The word “trafficking” can mean simply trade, but typically it implies an *illegal* trade. My remarks will broadly address the past and present of the trade, focusing on small arms, particularly firearms. And I will also reflect briefly on the distinction between trafficking and trade with reference to the future.

When firearms became central to warfare, governments faced a structural problem: they needed the gun manufacturers, but only intermittently. But allowing gun makers to compensate for that uneven government demand by selling arms to civilians was often dangerous. For instance, in early modern England, it was a time of dynastic and religious conflict, and firearms in civilian hands seemed a recipe for civil war. In order to support gun makers in peacetime so that they would still be around in wartime, the British government encouraged gun makers to sell their guns abroad. So, guns wound up enabling

the extraordinary expansion of the British Empire in the eighteenth century – as commodities, a currency, and powerful symbols and actual weapons for opening up markets and seizing land, including in North America. Arms sales also fueled the slave trade. Guns were sold to Native Americans and settlers in North America. They were gifted to Native Americans and to South Asian polities as part of the diplomacy of conquest. These sales and gifts were considered essential to British prestige and influence in those regions – and essential to smothering the threat posed by indigenous arms-making.

The East India Company was the main agent of British expansion in the Indian subcontinent, and it was itself a mass-purchaser of firearms. As Brian mentioned, many of the guns that wound up in Mexico were East India Pattern Brown Besses. They were the most massively produced arms of the period. All these sales in the interest of empire helped drive industrialization in Britain. At times British officials, predictably, expressed

The firearms industry is, of course, part of a wider arms industry whose global sales are similarly brokered by governments in the name of jobs and security. . . . A revolving door between defense agencies and arms firms facilitates this military-industrial complex. ”

concern that they might be arming their own enemies abroad, but such concerns were inevitably appeased with the argument that if they didn't do so they would be forfeiting profit, prestige, and influence because those buyers would simply turn to the French or another rival. Or, perhaps even worse, they might make their own arms. Moreover, by selling the firearms themselves, at least the British would know what kind of arsenal their opponents had.

Powerful anticolonial movements began to emerge by the middle and late nineteenth century around the world, and the appeal of that logic started to wane. By the late nineteenth century, British officials were belatedly struggling to limit arms possession among the Irish, Indians, Afghans, the Maori, black South Africans, and other groups they ruled. The efforts of these groups to obtain arms in defiance of those British restrictions gave rise to that moralizing language of arms “trafficking.” It was about a colonial concern with the wrong people getting arms, not about arms themselves being an immoral good (as in the sense of “human” or “drug” trafficking).

Despite these restrictions on colonial rebels buying guns, European arms sales continued to thrive. European and American arms companies often partnered with banks by the late nineteenth century, and those banks would give loans to client states, leading people to criticize the ensuing arms race. These arms companies, in response, would remind the concerned critics that their arms factories were essential to industry, that their profits accrued to vast bodies of shareholders and employees. In 1935, a British Royal Commission affirmed the reality of very wide public investment in the arms industry despite the growing criticism of arms makers as uniquely villainous “merchants of death” following World War I.

The modern world that we have inherited was and continues to be shaped by this history of arms sales. Like the British in the eighteenth century, the U.S. government today uses arms sales abroad and at home as part of what we now call the military-industrial complex. Though a long global

effort to regulate global firearms sales has culminated in the Arms Trade Treaty of 2014, instead of ratifying it the Trump administration is trying to ease controls on firearm exports by moving their oversight from the State Department to the Commerce Department, where some sales may not even require licensing. American arms are on all sides of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria. The Islamic State has American arms. Complicity in these sales, as in eighteenth-century Britain, remains wide. Ordinary people like us participate through our tax support, and we benefit through investment, employment, and so on. Even the art world thrives from donations from gun makers.

The firearms industry is, of course, part of a wider arms industry whose global sales are similarly brokered by governments in the name of jobs and security, including for instance the Trump administration's controversial arms sales to Saudi Arabia despite their role in devastating Yemen and the Saudi government's abuses of its own citizens. A revolving door between defense agencies and arms firms facilitates this military-industrial complex. Even Silicon Valley owes its rise to defense contracts, which remain important today. Meanwhile strict gun laws in other countries have made American civilians the single most important market in the world for firearms manufacturers. America has always had gun control historically, but the NRA peddles the myth that America is built on the idea of unregulated gun ownership, and it does this in order to protect access to this civilian market. As a result, American civilians now own nearly half the firearms that exist in the world. The American government and governments around the world have an interest in keeping this civilian market open to support an industry understood as essential to security.

Those concerned about *this* trafficking and its violent effects tend to focus on the villainy of the NRA and the politicians in its pocket, but complicity in arms trafficking is much wider. And that collective investment in a way of life built on arms sales is sustained by the idea that security depends

on a mutually terrorized public and a mutually terrorized world. This idea has sustained ties between war and industrial capitalism since the eighteenth century. But the same period has also given us alternative visions of social organization that question whether industrial capitalism, with all its human and environmental wreckage, is really a kind of inescapable default. Arms makers themselves at times suffer from bad conscience. Perhaps the most famous example of this for those of us who live locally is Sarah Winchester, who was haunted by the ghosts of those killed by the Winchester rifle. Bad conscience drove her to build a crazy mansion, the Winchester Mystery House, in the heart of what is now Silicon Valley. But she went on with arms manufacturing, partly just to pay for the construction of this unending project.

Is it possible to reckon more practically with this military-industrial system in which we are all complicit? The gun control movement is pressuring companies to disengage from the firearms industry, and it's true that sustained activism can produce cultural change—in the same manner that the NRA's activism has produced a cultural change. As Brian has brilliantly argued in his work, our taxpaying power can be leveraged in decisions about local, state, and federal arms contracts. And then there is the manufacturing capacity of arms makers themselves. Eighteenth-century gun makers coped with uneven government demand by selling guns abroad, but they also coped with uneven demand by diversifying their products. They made things like buckles, harpoons, and swords. Nineteenth-century gun makers produced bicycles, typewriters, and razor blades.

Today's arms makers might also turn swords into ploughshares, and as we face environmental devastation ploughshares are probably more crucial to security than arms. They might, in short, contract for welfare rather than warfare. In 1807, the British government abolished the slave trade despite many vested interests in it out of a sense that humans were not a morally defensible “commodity.” Some goods should simply not be sold. And this is why the word *trafficking* creates a false distinction when it comes to arms, in distinguishing between legal and illegal arms trades. It's not the legality that matters, but whether the commodity in question is morally defensible given the political, economic, and existential stakes.

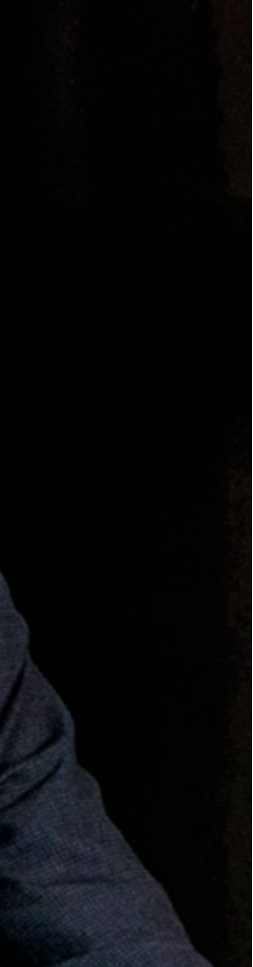
Ron Hassner

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For international relations scholars, and I count myself as one, weapons are a primary concern because we view power first and foremost in terms of military force. There is a significant corpus on the production and sale of weapons of mass destruction or large weapons platforms, submarines, aircraft carriers, missile systems, jets, helicopters, and the like, but there is almost no literature, let alone theory, on arms trafficking. The few articles that are in circulation are very weakly cited and appear in journals of international law and crime, not in journals of international security or international politics. In other words, to political scientists, this is not a political science problem. For them, it is an organized crime problem related to narcotics or corruption. The literature has not linked the small arms issue with terrorism, for example, in a theoretically or empirically robust way.

Since there is no political science literature on weapons trafficking for me to lean on, the best I can offer is to speculate about how my colleagues would write about this issue if they did take it on. The answer in brief is they would assume a rationalist and a materialist stance. My functionalist colleagues would focus on strategic military threats and ask how weapons trafficking addresses those challenges. My factionalist colleagues would focus on procurement policy and shift the lens





away from overarching military needs and onto domestic political conflicts. Geostrategists would emphasize global conflicts and shifts in world order as an external driving force pushing actors to acquire arms. If you think about the case of Israel, for example, and if you use a functionalist lens, you will see the young state of Israel seeking from its allies the weapons that it needs to defend itself in 1948. The suppliers are Czech, with the Soviet Union's blessing. France, later on, becomes a primary source of munitions. And then very late in the process, after Israel has survived most of its existential conflicts, the United States steps in. But now that the United States has stepped out, who would Israel turn to given that the United States and Israel are cooperating on weapons manufacturing and that the other competitors in the Middle East, and in Russia and China, have little to offer on that front?

The functionalist approach would also emphasize how the United States is tying Israel to the U.S. economy by offering a very substantial amount of foreign aid. Israel is sometimes the number one or number two recipient of foreign military aid from the United States, which it uses to buy American weapons in the United States. Israel cannot use that aid for any other purpose.

The factionalists look at the domestic drivers of munition purchases. They would be interested in seeing how leaders in Israel – or in any other country – decide between foreign purchase, which creates dependency, and domestic production, which encourages development and local investment. For Israel, this was an investment in Elbit, in Rafael, and in the Israeli military industry that rose and fell depending on the extent to which France, the United States, and Britain were willing to help or not. When you get help from your allies, it suppresses your domestic production. When your allies fall by the wayside, like the French did in 1967 by abandoning the Israeli alliance, you become more independent.

The geostrategic lens would focus on armament levels in the Middle East by looking at Cold War effects. The Arab-Israeli conflict would not have lasted as long as it did and would not have led to such a high number of fatalities had it not been a game played by the United States and the Soviet Union to sell weapons, to use weapons, and to try out tactics and strategies that were attached to those weapons.

There are two modest exceptions to this relative disinterest among my international relations colleagues: one, scholarly progress on the institutional front and, two, some exciting work on norms in

arms trafficking. In the first group are scholars who study the growing efforts to prevent and combat illicit trafficking. They note that regional organizations like the European Union, the Organization of American States, Mercosur, and the Organization of African Unity, among others, have stepped up their efforts. These scholars place particular hope in the United Nations to organize conferences and develop protocols against arms manufacturing and trafficking. Several of those exist and they work to some extent. States are increasingly coordinating on regulating legal arms transfer, coordinating arms brokering, marking and tracing firearms, managing weapon stockpiles and destruction of those stockpiles, and collecting arms from civilians.

An even smaller group of scholars is interested in how these regional and international agreements are fostering shared global norms around the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons, in particular, as they cause and exacerbate conflict. These norms include passing more stringent national legislation, implementing better arms transfer licensing systems, enhancing border controls and customs authorities, and improving international information exchange. In my mind, the most fascinating literature on this topic, which I note is very small, is less interested in international norms against trafficking and more concerned with the normative foundation of the trafficked weapons themselves.

Most scholars study trafficking from a rationalist perspective. These scholars, on the other hand, are interested in weapons as symbols of modernization and sovereignty. They view their production and purchase as signals that states send one another to demonstrate their reputations. Let me conclude with a quote from Mark Suchman and Dana Eyre: "It is all too easy to fall into the trap of assuming that the reason human beings arm is to fight and the reason they fight is to win. If instead we take weapons seriously, not only as tools of destruction but also as sacred symbols, we may gain a better understanding of the role of war in our world view and of the role of the warrior in our cultural ethos. Ultimately, we may find that to prevent the irrationality of armed conflicts we must first understand the nonrational meanings that we have constructed for our acts of arming and for our armaments themselves."¹

1. Mark Suchman and Dana P. Eyre, "Military Procurement as Rational Myth: Notes on the Social Construction of Weapons Proliferation," *Sociological Forum* 7 (1) (March 1992): 157.

Daniel J. Sargent

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I would like to focus on the relationship between arms – that is, arms as a constituent element of what we might call the American world order or Pax Americana – and American hegemony. And I want to start from the presumption that the intimate place of arms in the making of an American centered world order, a Pax Americana, is profoundly ironic. After all, President Woodrow Wilson, whom diplomatic historians commonly identify as the founding father of American internationalism, issued fourteen famous points. His fourth point was: “Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.” At the time, American conceptions of international order were profoundly antagonistic to this phenomenon of the international arms trade, which would become over the long arc of the twentieth century an important component of a U.S.-centered hierarchical international order.

The interesting question for me as a historian is how did this happen? In the 1920s, after the

Senate’s rejection of Woodrow Wilson’s League of Nations treaty, the United States participates in a series of international efforts to control and corral the international arms trade. In the early 1920s, the United States hosts a set of naval conferences intended to reduce naval armaments. The United States also participates in a series of ill-fated disarmament conferences in Geneva that ultimately culminate in an unsuccessful Geneva disarmament conference in 1933. Throughout this phase, a movement of historical revisionism concerned with the nefarious relationship between arms and finance in the genesis and waging of World War I animates public intellectuals, policy-makers, and ordinary citizens to take a strong and robust stand against the arms trade. Bestselling books are published, with titles like *Merchants of Death* and *War Is a Racket*. They give a sense of the animus with which Americans in the 1920s and 1930s viewed the international trade in weapons of war.

In 1935, the Nye Committee in Congress convened a series of hearings to examine the

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relationship between the arms trade, international finance, and U.S. participation in World War I. The committee's conclusion was that there was a nefarious linkage and that the arms industry was squarely responsible for dragging the United States into war. The outrage that the committee's hearings fueled propelled a turn away from the international arms trade in U.S. domestic politics in the 1930s. This mood was manifested perhaps most consequentially in the series of neutrality laws that the Congress passes beginning in 1935 that seek to circumscribe future U.S. participation in the international trade in weapons. Now, we should acknowledge that the prohibitive turn in U.S. attitudes toward the arms trade is not always beneficial. When a civil war breaks out in Spain in August 1936, the U.S. Congress quickly places an embargo on U.S. arms exports to the Spanish republic. This embargo has the direct consequence of facilitating the Franco nationalist insurgency's overthrow of the Spanish republic. Denied the weapons of war with which it might have defended itself more adeptly against Franco's armies, armies that were supported with weapons from Germany and Italy, both fascist powers, the Spanish republic falls to defeat. And the United States, in a sense by imposing an arms embargo, becomes complicit in the overthrow of a liberal democratic republic at the hands of a fascist insurgency.

In the late 1930s, the Nazi consolidation of power in Europe pushed the United States to reexamine and reconsider its relationship to the international arms trade. Beginning in 1939, Franklin Roosevelt started to prepare the United States for possible embroilment in World War II and to provide whatever assistance possible to Great Britain. Yet domestic isolationism, a potent political force, thwarts Roosevelt's efforts to ready the United States for war and to aid Great Britain. Running for reelection in 1940, FDR feels called to promise an audience in Boston, Massachusetts, "Your boys will not be sent into any foreign wars." The mood of political isolationism in the United States is so strong that Roosevelt has to abandon the very possibility that the United States might directly

involve itself in Europe's wars. Instead FDR devises an alternative strategy for aiding Great Britain and countering the Axis powers: he sets the United States up as an arms dealer to the democratic world. This strategy is encapsulated famously in the arsenal of democracy speech that Roosevelt delivers at the end of 1940. Cognizant that the American people are not going to tolerate direct U.S. involvement in World War II, Roosevelt instead proposes to make the United States the arsenal of democracy, to furnish the fruits of American industry to benefit the British and, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the USSR too, and to support these powers in their war against Nazi Germany.

Of course, Pearl Harbor in December 1941 transforms the strategic landscape and makes it possible for the United States to involve itself directly in World War II to counter the military and geopolitical threat of Nazi Germany. And after the war, arms become an integral modality of American Cold War hegemony. The United States quickly established itself as a guarantor of security to subordinate allies, and these security guarantees are encapsulated most famously in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, a clause that commits the United States to the security of its West European allies. Yet the United States also strives to uphold the security of its allies through the direct provision of weapons of war, through the military assistance program that Congress enacts in the 1950s. The United States throws open the doors of the armory and invites Europeans to take what they need. The only prohibition is on American transfers of nuclear arms to Western Europe, but even here the United States shows some flexibility. The United States will not sell nuclear weapons to its West European allies, but it does create in the 1950s a variety of schemes for giving West Europeans de facto control over U.S. nuclear weapons.

Arms in the context of an escalating Cold War become an essential part of the international order. As the Cold War intensifies, the United States assumes on behalf of its allies responsibility for security. This is a point worth pondering. Security

historically in the Westphalian era has been a defining attribute of sovereignty. What makes a state a state is its capacity to protect its citizens against untimely violent death. In the context of an escalating Cold War, the United States will come to exercise this determinative attribute of sovereignty on behalf of its subordinate Cold War allies. The model that is deployed in Europe will be deployed elsewhere in the world. The United States forms relationships and military cooperation in Latin America and establishes a raft of bilateral security agreements in East Asia. It builds regional security frameworks in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, including in the Middle East.

As the Cold War progresses, the retreat of European imperialism from the decolonizing and increasingly postcolonial world pushes the United States to expand its role as a provider of arms. Arms become increasingly a vital guarantee of regional security and of U.S. hegemonic power. An illustrative case in point will follow the British retreat from military positions east of Suez in 1967. After the British decide that they can no longer take responsibility for providing military security in the Persian Gulf, American officials ponder the question of how regional military security in the Persian Gulf region will be assured. The Nixon administration formulates an ad hoc solution whereby the United States will provide weapons of war to Iran and Saudi Arabia, which become the twin pillars of American regional security strategy in the Persian Gulf. To this end the United States once again throws open the doors of the armory. In a remarkable 1972 meeting between the Shah of Iran and the President of the United States, Iran tells the United States that it is willing to purchase any weapons that the United States has to sell. Even more striking, President Nixon tells the Shah of Iran that it is okay for Iran to increase oil prices in order to be able to pay for the weapons that it's going to be importing from the United States.

In the 1970s, Iran becomes the world's single largest importer of weapons. It builds a remarkable arsenal that includes the world's largest fleet of military hovercraft, a quite remarkable sort of expression of Iran's military capability. Of course, we know how this story ends. Iran in the 1970s is a parable cautioning against the pernicious and destabilizing effects of the international trade in arms. Indeed, there is a powerful case to be made that the Shah's preoccupation with building up

Iran's military power contributed to the country's destabilization and in 1979 to the overthrow of the regime. However, I am not certain that we would rush to that cautionary conclusion. Let me make three points by way of conclusion.

First, we should always be mindful that the decision for a superpower like the United States to withhold participation in the international arms trade is an ethical choice, just as providing arms to weaker powers in the international system is an ethical choice. Think of Bosnia in the 1990s, for example. The arms embargo that the international community slapped on Bosnia in the context of the Bosnian civil war made it very difficult for the Bosnian government to protect itself and its civilians from vicious and violent attacks staged by internal insurgents with weapons of war provided by rogue powers, the Republic of Serbia most consequentially. We could also think of Syria since 2011.

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Second, states that lack arms industries depend upon the international arms trade in the twenty-first century in order to be able to exercise what Max Weber defined as a defining attribute of sovereignty, namely, the capacity to exercise legitimate violence. Brian showed in his talk what happens in places like Mexico today, where states lack effective monopolies over the exercise of violence. Chaos and mayhem can easily ensue. As the world's largest exporter of armaments, the United States is perhaps singularly capable of providing other states in the international system with the means of destruction necessary to exercise legitimate monopolies over the use of violent force. This is a remarkable power and the United States should be very wary of using this power frivolously without due care and consideration. It is also

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important to remember that the arms trade constitutes a lever of power that can enable the United States to influence in more positive ways the internal conditions of countries that receive arms from the United States.

The tethering, for example, of specific human rights conditions to arms deliveries can function as a means to ameliorate human rights depredations in countries that receive weapons of war from the United States. In Latin America, for example, during the 1970s the tethering of human rights conditions to military assistance may have served to nudge the trajectory for human rights in Argentina in the right direction, just to describe one case. We should also consider on this point a scenario in which the United States unilaterally restrains its role as a deliverer of weapons to developing societies. Would the world be safer, would developing states be more secure, if the United States ceded this vital lever of power and influence to Russia or China? It is something to think about.

Finally, the alternative to U.S. arms trading may be worse. Here the Iranian case is instructive. Let us think briefly about what happens in Iran subsequent to the revolution of 1979. In the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, the Carter administration contemplates how regional military security in the Persian Gulf region will be provided. Bereft of alternatives, the Iranians can no longer be relied upon to police the gulf, and so the Carter administration decides that the United States should adopt and exercise direct responsibility for assuring military security in the Persian Gulf region. The United States creates a regional military-security architecture that evolves in 1983 into U.S. central command, the first of the unified combatant command architectures that today envelop the planet. In the absence of relationships whereby the United States equips allies with responsibility for exercising regional military security, the United States may feel called upon to exercise such military functions on its own. I think we should be aware of the escalating and cascading responsibilities that

can ensue from this alternative scenario for security provision.

Let me add that we should always be aware of the costs that arms control can embroil us in. The United States over the long arc of the twentieth century created a hierarchical international order in which arms became a defining modality of international power. Today such relationships may have metastasized into a political and constitutional crisis that threatens the very fate of the republic itself. After all, the U.S. Congress in 2014 began to appropriate funds to support Ukraine in its struggle against Russia. Since then, Russia has invaded Crimea and supported insurgents in Eastern Ukraine in the Donbass region. The United States has strived to support the government of Ukraine in its efforts to maintain regional security within its sovereign borders. Yet the relationships of dependency that the arms trade has helped to build between the United States and Ukraine tempted the incumbent president, Donald Trump, to use arms trading as a lever from which to extract specific political favors from the Ukrainian government, and the consequences have today propelled the United States to the cusp of the severest constitutional crisis since Watergate.

In conclusion, the levels of inequality that the international arms trade creates and that have been integral to the American world order since 1945 embroil states, including the United States, in relationships of hierarchy as well as of mutual vulnerability that can redound to the detriment not only of the powerless but also, as we see today in Washington, of the most powerful.

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The Global Refugee Crisis

What's Next and
What Can Be Done?



“More people worldwide are being displaced from their homes for longer periods than ever before,” noted **David Miliband**, president and chief executive officer of the International Rescue Committee, at a gathering of Academy members and guests at the inaugural Jonathan F. Fanton Lecture in New York. Miliband, one of the foremost advocates for refugees and a leader in responses to global humanitarian and human rights crises, described the causes of today’s global refugee crisis and offered solutions, both simple and effective. An edited version of his remarks follows.

2090th Stated Meeting | February 4, 2020 | The University Club of New York
Jonathan F. Fanton Lecture



David Miliband

David Miliband is President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee. From 2007 to 2010, he served as the 74th Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom. He previously served as Secretary of State for the Environment and was a Member of Parliament for South Shields from 2001 to 2013. He was elected an International Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2018.



It is a pleasure to speak with you this evening at the inaugural Jonathan F. Fanton Lecture about the global refugee crisis. One of the challenges surrounding the refugee crisis is that the norms and laws of liberal democracy are in retreat. Since 2006, 113 countries have suffered what Freedom House calls a democratic recession, that is, a reduction in the score that they receive for political freedom: they have less free press, less free judiciary, and less free elections.

It is interesting to note that 2019 is the first year since 1900 when the world's autocracies contributed more to global income than the world's democracies. More than 50 percent of global GDP comes from countries that are not democratic. While there are countries in which we see reductions in political freedom, nothing quite compares to being a civilian or an aid worker in a war zone. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is working on behalf of the refugees and the internally displaced,

those who are displaced by conflict or persecution from their own home but remain within their country. But we also work in war zones. In Northwest Syria, for example, three hundred civilians have been killed in the last two weeks by the Russian-Syrian bombing campaign. The fact that civilians have protections under international law is beside the point, because this is the ultimate transgression of the liberal international order. We are in a period that I call the age of impunity.

What do I mean by that? Basically, the new normal in war zones around the world is that, contrary to international law, civilians are fair game for armed combatants, that humanitarian aid workers are an unfortunate but expendable collateral of military campaigns, that investigations and accountability for war crimes are an optional extra rather than a core part of the conduct of war. The age of impunity means that if you follow the laws of armed conflict, you are a fool. The new



70.8 million people are displaced around the world by war, conflict, and persecution. That amounts to one out of every 110 people on the planet. ”

normal means that combatants in war zones think that they can get away with anything, and so they do everything. They use chemical weapons, they target hospitals, they target aid workers, and they besiege cities and starve the population. For most of the world's seven and a half billion citizens, this is not the new normal. But if you are unfortunate enough to be caught in a war zone – and not just in Syria – this is the new normal for you.

Last year, for example, of the one thousand attacks on health workers, hospitals, ambulances, and patients in conflict zones, 250 of them occurred in Syria. The greatest harm, by the way, is to the most vulnerable: 140 million children live in active war zones around the world today. In those statistics, you get a sense of the changing nature of conflict, not just the impunity of those who are in the field but the role of non-state actors. It is not just states that are committing war crimes; it is also non-state actors that never signed the Geneva Conventions but are still obliged to live by them. It is striking to me that seventy countries are involved in other people's civil wars at the moment. So the use of proxy and partner forces is a feature of modern warfare.

The purpose of sharing these contextual factors is that they explain in a significant way why we are suffering a global refugee crisis. And understanding what people are fleeing from helps us to understand why they are fleeing and what can be done about it. Let me share a few more pieces of data:

70.8 million people are displaced around the world by war, conflict, and persecution. That amounts to one out of every 110 people on the planet. We are not talking about people who are fleeing for economic reasons, but rather people who are fleeing because it is not safe for them to remain at home. The definition of a refugee is someone who has a well-founded fear of persecution. In the administrative law that has been developed by the United Nations and by member states over the last seventy or eighty years, a refugee is someone for whom it is not safe to be in their own home country. Of the 70.8 million people displaced around the world, approximately 30 million have crossed borders, so they are refugees or asylum seekers, and 40 million are internally displaced. If we consider the Syrian conflict, out of an original population of 24 million in 2011, there are about 6 million Syrian refugees living outside the country and about 8 million internally displaced inside Syria. In the northwest, about 3.5 million people live in the Idlib province at the moment. The original population was between 2 and 2.5 million, so there are about a million internally displaced, who have been shepherded into the Idlib province by the Assad regime.

This population – 30 million refugees and asylum seekers, 40 million internally displaced – is larger than at any time since World War II. Half of all of those 70 million are children under the age of eighteen. Ninety percent live in poor or lower-



middle-income countries. This is an important point because if you listen to the political debate you would think that it was Western countries, the richer countries, that are hosting most of the refugees. That is simply not correct. Most refugees are in countries such as Bangladesh, Kenya, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, which has 3.7 million refugees from Syria. Those statistics qualify the refugee issue as a “crisis.” Now crisis is obviously an overused word, but when we consider the length of displacement that refugees suffer, it rises to the level of a crisis.

Based on statistics from the United Nations, the average time refugees spend in camps is twenty years. So displacement affects generations. It is crucial to understand why this is a crisis, and not just a problem. If you are displaced for six months, that is bad enough; if you are displaced for six years, that is really tough. If you are displaced for sixteen years, it is a whole different ball game. From my point of view, the duration of displacement is closely aligned to another statistic: 60 percent of refugees do not live in camps; they live in urban areas. And that is the bitter reality for many of the people that the International Rescue Committee serves.

The International Rescue Committee was founded by Albert Einstein in the 1930s. We serve refugees, the internally displaced, those in war

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zones, those who shelter refugees, and those who support refugees. When we run a health center, we make sure it is open to the local population, not just to the refugee population because some of the needs of the local population are as big as the needs of refugees. For example, if you live outside the Dadaab refugee camp, which is one of the largest refugee camps in Kenya, your life expectancy is lower than if you live inside the camp. And that’s why it is important that our health facilities in the camp are open to the local population. But there is a second reason. As I mentioned, most refugees live in urban areas. If you want to guarantee tension between refugees and a host population, then saying that health centers or employment programs are only for refugees and not for the host population is a recipe for real trouble. So by opening up these programs to those in need, we serve a practical purpose.



What are the causes of this refugee crisis? How have we ended up in a situation in which thirty years after the end of the Cold War, more people are fleeing violence than at any time since World War II? There are four factors at the root of this refugee crisis. One is that there are a growing number of fragile or failing states around the world. A fragile or a failing state, for my purposes, is a state where the political institutions are too weak, or even nonexistent, to be able to broker a political compromise. State fragility lies at the heart of this conundrum. There are fewer wars *between* states than at any time since 1945, but there are more wars *within* states than at any time since 1945. And the root of that is from the weakness of political institutions to be the fulcrum of compromise and political debate. When communities feel that they do not have a stake in the political system, then they resort to violence. And when there is violence, we end up with refugee flows.

The second driver of this refugee crisis is the shift in the global balance of power from an essentially post-Cold War unipolar world in which the West was dominant to a multipolar world. The consequence of this shift is that global political institutions are gridlocked on issues of war and peace. The Russians believe they have an interest in upholding the Assad regime. The United States believes it has an interest in upholding the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. But they also raise deep philosophical questions regarding civil war: such as whether a government of a particular country has the right to do what it likes within that country. And there isn't a simple division between the democratic world thinking one thing and the autocratic world thinking another. To take an example close to home, the United States has always been extremely leery of international, legal, and

other entanglements. Even the Convention on the Law of the Sea, which the United States abides by, hasn't passed into U.S. law. Now obviously China takes as its founding idea of foreign policy the notion that external interference in internal affairs is a complete anathema. And so the second driver of the untold suffering that leads people to abandon everything and flee their country is gridlock in the international political system.

The third driver concerns religion. The International Rescue Committee was founded as a secular organization. Today, 45 percent of our work is in Muslim-majority countries. It is striking that the turmoil in parts of the Islamic world about theology, about governance, about engagement with the rest of the world plays a role in understanding why the Middle East is on fire in various ways. And if you look at the Central African Republic, with refugees in Cameroon, there is strife between the Christian and Muslim communities. And in the northeast of Nigeria, 1.2 million people are being held prisoner by a branch of the Islamic State that is out of reach of the Nigerian government and of international humanitarian aid organizations.

The fourth driver is climate change, which causes economic displacement. The climate crisis and the resulting resource stress it creates will obviously grow. None of these trends are short term. Neither the weakness of states nor the gridlock of the international system nor the roiling turmoil within Islam nor the climate crisis have short-term solutions.

So what do we do? Let me start with some good news. We actually know what to do if we want to treat the symptoms of the refugee crisis. What is the thing that most refugees lack? They lack cash because they have left everything behind. So the best thing that you can do is give them cash, which

helps them and the local economy. We did a study in Lebanon in 2014, which showed that for every \$1 you give to a refugee, \$2.13 goes to the local economy because they buy from shops, and the shops in turn then buy more, and you create a positive economic dynamic. It is not difficult to give people cash in a secure way. You can give it to them on their mobile phone, you can give it to them through a card, you can give it to them in local currency. And it sounds obvious but the first question we ask is “Why not give them cash?” Many people say that we must give food aid. It is actually much better to give them cash rather than truck the food to them. So policy solution number one is about cash. Policy solution number two is also embarrassingly obvious. Since half of the refugees and displaced people around the world are children, they need education. Yet less than 2 percent of the global humanitarian budget goes to education. There are generations of children who are being shortchanged by the failure to offer them the most basic education, whether in a schooling system, if it exists, or in community-based learning.

The challenge of providing education is understanding the trauma that refugees and war-affected children have faced. The brain science on this is amazing. You can track the brain trauma of children who have witnessed or experienced unspeakable cruelty, but you can also track the way in which the synapses of the brain recover when nurtured and supported in the right way. There is obviously basic learning, and then vocational and other opportunities.

The third part of the good news is that the policy answer for refugees is to allow them to work. Most countries that host refugees do not allow them to work, which of course drives them into the informal economy where they do not pay taxes and do not contribute to the country where they live. Now before we blame the countries that are not allowing refugees to work, we should recognize that if you are hosting a lot of refugees, like Jordan, you do not get credit with the IMF or the World Bank for the macroeconomic responsibility that you are shouldering. If you accept that hosting refugees is a global public good, poor or lower-middle-income countries are not currently being supported to do that. Now the World Bank has made some efforts in this area. They are putting about \$2.5 billion a year toward this, but if we consider that Jordan’s debt to GDP ratio has gone

from 55 percent to 94 percent since the start of the Syrian war, you can see that we are not making up for the burden that they are carrying. The unemployment rate for Jordanian adults is 26 percent. So there is a new bargain to be struck in which refugees get the chance to work and support themselves and their families, and the countries that are hosting them get macroeconomic support.

The fourth part of the good news is that refugee resettlement, which is the program designed for the most vulnerable refugees and their transfer to third countries, is a very good policy. It has been shown that people who arrive under a refugee resettlement program pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits over a ten-year period. They are less likely to commit crimes than the indigenous population. We have even tracked that they pay back their car loans more expeditiously than the host population.

“ We actually know what to do if we want to treat the symptoms of the refugee crisis. What is the thing that most refugees lack? They lack cash because they have left everything behind. So the best thing that you can do is give them cash, which helps them and the local economy.

Unfortunately, there is no political will to implement these solutions. In the crisis of diplomacy that we are seeing around the world, there is no political desire for the kind of engagement that is necessary to resolve these crises in the first place, which is obviously the only real answer. According to David Armitage, since 1989, there have been on average twenty civil wars around the world at any given moment, approximately ten times the global average between 1816 and 1989. And that is a really powerful demonstration of what we mean by a crisis of diplomacy. In addition, these twenty civil wars that have been occurring since 1989 last three times as long as wars in the first half of the twentieth century. David Armitage’s research also found that nearly every new civil war in this century was



a resumption of an old civil war. The most likely product of a civil war is another one. Second, the absence of political will and ingenuity is contributing to the gap between humanitarian needs and humanitarian provision. Education is an example. About 75 percent of secondary-school-aged children who are refugees are out of school at the moment. This gap between needs and provision is not a function of not knowing how to reach these people or how to help them. It is a function of political decisions.

Third, policy attacks on refugees, including in the United States, are a political decision. President Ronald Reagan let in more refugees under the refugee resettlement program than any other president. Over two hundred thousand refugees per year in the 1980s, many of them from Vietnam, were allowed into the country. The historic average is about ninety thousand a year, reached during the last year of the Obama administration. The Trump administration has cut the number to eighteen thousand. And when the United States makes a decision like this, it has ricochet effects elsewhere. Other countries may say, if America is not taking in refugees, then why should we? We are seeing a retreat that is politically driven rather than policy driven.

And now we are back full circle to where I started: the age of impunity is borne of neglect. It is borne of a refusal to hold accountable those who commit war crimes. It is a refusal to make the war in Syria or in Yemen a high priority in the global diplomatic debate. And as we know from history, policy and politics are intermingled in this domain. Two-thirds of Americans thought Jews should not be allowed into America in 1940, according to a *Washington Post* poll, which is about the same number of people who today think that

Muslims should not be allowed into the country. So the politics and the policy are interlinked. Einstein had a vision for founding the IRC, but in truth, he founded the IRC out of frustration. He wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt to persuade her to influence her husband and allow Jews from Europe into America. She said that she could not persuade him. And so Einstein established the International Rescue Committee out of frustration with the lack of any political or policy response.

We need to acknowledge that there is polarization on this issue. What we are finding is that for every person who fears having a refugee live next to them, there is someone else who says well, hang on, I have a refugee in my family, or I know a refugee at work, or I already have a refugee as a neighbor, or there is a refugee who attends my church or my synagogue or my mosque.

And I think it is really important that we understand that for an organization like the IRC we cannot rely on only ourselves to do the good work and hope that our efforts speak for themselves. We have to rescue the best of the traditions of Western, liberal, democratic countries, uphold the rules of war, uphold the idea of sanctuary for those who are fleeing persecution. If you are an employer, I encourage you to give refugees a chance to work. If you are a citizen, use your voice to publicize the plight of refugees. If you are a philanthropist, please come and support us.

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To view or listen to the presentation, visit www.amacad.org/events/global-refugee-crisis





Criminal Justice as Social Justice

How might social research contribute to a retreat from mass incarceration, make the world fairer, and promote alternatives to punishment that help communities become safer and healthier? In a presentation at the Academy, **Bruce Western**, Bryce Professor of Sociology and Social Justice and Co-Director of the Justice Lab at Columbia University, explored this topic and the implications of mass incarceration for racial and economic inequality. An edited version of his remarks follows.

2091st Stated Meeting | February 19, 2020 | Cambridge, MA

Bruce Western

Bruce Western is the Bryce Professor of Sociology and Social Justice and Co-Director of the Justice Lab at Columbia University. He is also the Principal Investigator of the Square One Project. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2007.



This afternoon I visited a prison, MCI-Cedar Junction. In 2007, during my first year at Harvard, I taught a course at MCI-Norfolk with a group of Harvard undergraduates and a group from MCI-Norfolk, who were colleges students enrolled through BU's prison education program. It was an extraordinary seminar and a real turning point for me in many ways. I hope to weave some of that experience into my talk tonight.

My topic this evening takes up a theme I worked on with the Academy ten years ago. In convenings with Glenn Loury, professor of economics at Brown University, we explored the contours

of mass incarceration and its implications for racial and economic inequality. Glenn and I edited an issue of *Dædalus* and contributed to the Academy's program of work in the area of Democracy and Justice.

Tonight, I want to return to that theme and take up the question of how does social research contribute to the project of justice. How might research help to make the world fairer and, in my area, contribute to a retreat from mass incarceration and promote alternatives to punishment that help communities to be safer and healthier?

This will be a play in three acts. Act One tells the story of mass incarceration, which has been

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the empirical and policy focus of most of the work I have done in the criminal justice area over the last twenty years. Act Two is about the Boston Reentry Study: a small-scale field study that was more finely tuned to realities on the ground and the immediate questions being raised by policymakers. And Act Three is about the stories I was hearing in the field, which reflect my rather experimental efforts at a more qualitative approach that aimed to change the narrative around criminal justice reform.

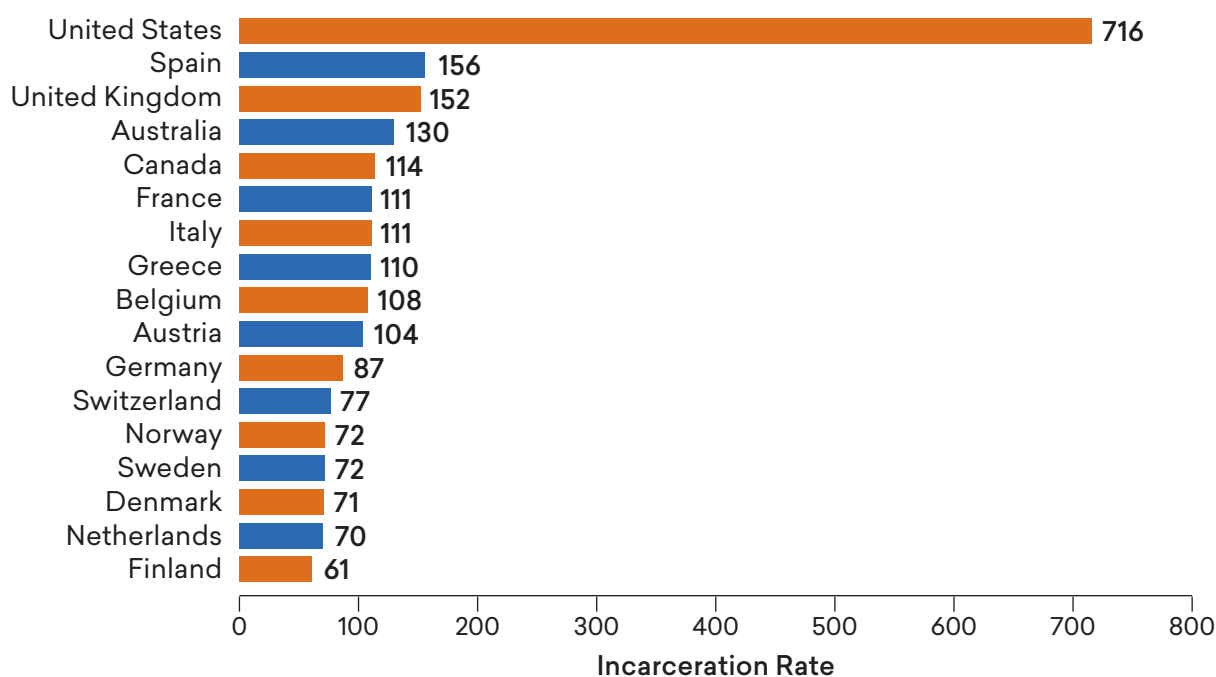
The main thread is that research – particularly in the areas of reducing inequality, and social justice more generally – gains leverage mainly by shifting narratives in public and policy conversations in a way that humanizes, gives voice, and dignifies the social life of those facing oppression, disadvantage, and injustice. Much of the power of our work resides in bearing witness in dark places.

Act One: mass incarceration. We measure the scale of the penal system in a country with an

incarceration rate, which is the number of people who are locked up on any given day. This rate is typically measured per hundred thousand of the population. The incarceration rate in Western European countries in 2011 was about 100 per one hundred thousand.

In the United States, the incarceration rate is almost an order of magnitude larger: about 700 per one hundred thousand. Now we can think about how unusual the American penal system is in historical context because we have very good data that go back to the mid-1920s. What we see is that from the mid-1920s to the early 1970s, the imprisonment rate in the United States was around 100 per one hundred thousand – about what it is in Western Europe today. But in the early 1970s the system began to grow. And it grew every year for the next thirty-five years. Over the last ten years it has ticked down a little, but even so, we are still sitting atop this plateau in which the scale of penal confinement

International Incarceration Rates, 2011



in this country is five times higher than its historic average.

Now what does that mean in terms of numbers? By 2013, we had about 1.6 million people in state or federal prison. These are people who were convicted of felony offenses – more serious crimes – and are serving at least twelve months in a state or federal facility. At the median, they are serving about twenty-eight months. Now that is not the entire incarcerated population because there are another 730,000 people in local jails and most of these people are awaiting trial. They are legally innocent but they are incarcerated pending court action, or they are serving short sentences – about one quarter are serving short sentences under twelve months.

But that is not the entire correctional population because there are about 850,000 people in the community who have served custodial sentences and they are meeting with a parole officer out in the community. But that is not the entire community corrections population because another 4 million people have been given non-custodial sentences and they are meeting with a probation officer out in the community. You add it all up and it is about 7 million people in the United States who are currently under some sort of correctional supervision.

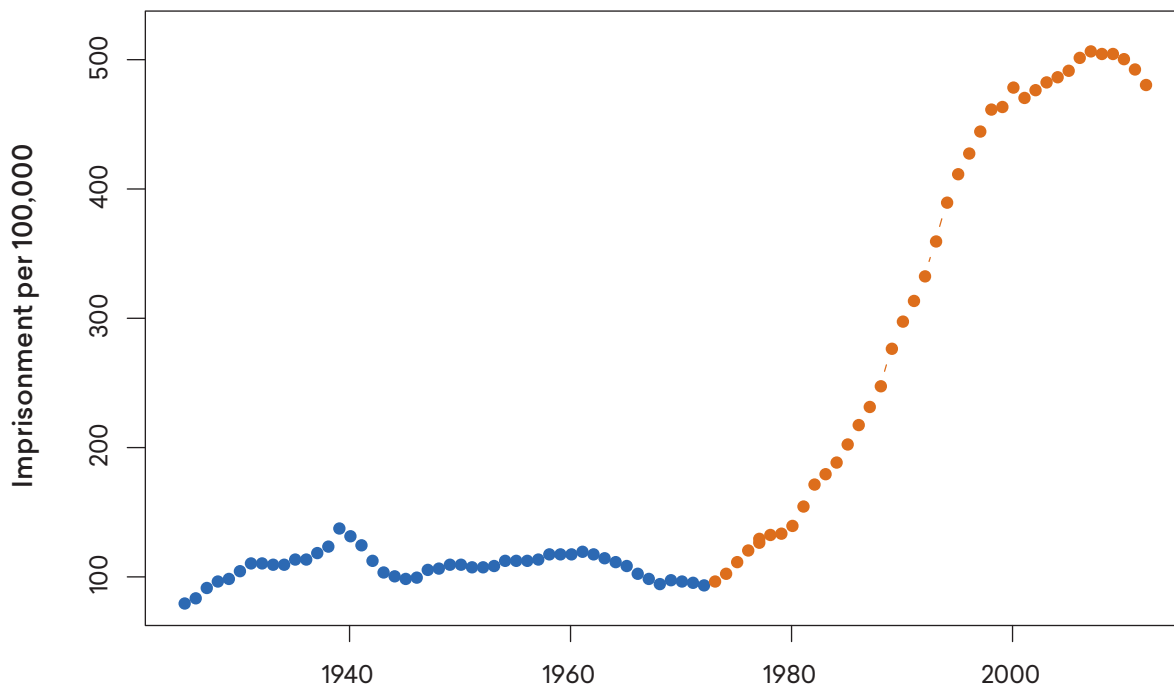
Now, as important as these numbers are, what is most important about incarceration in America is its unequal distribution across the population.

Some of the questions we are interested in include: What is the lifetime risk of incarceration? We might be interested in a statistic like that because we think that incarceration confers a whole array of disadvantages that affects you even after you leave prison. How large is the group at risk of those adverse life chances?

Let’s consider a group of men born in the late 1940s. These men are reaching their mid-thirties toward the end of the 1970s, and so they are growing up before the American prison boom.

For African American men in this 1945–1949 birth cohort who never went to college – and that’s about half of all African American men – we estimate that about 12 percent have prison records by the time they are in their thirties. I am talking about the deep end of the system: felony convictions, twenty-eight months of time served at the median. This is work that I have done with my collaborator Becky Pettit, a demographer at the University of Texas at Austin. Becky and I estimated that for African American men who never finished high school and were born just after World War II, 15 percent in this birth cohort

Imprisonment Rate, 1925 to 2012



Mass incarceration criminalized a variety of social problems that were related to racial inequality and poverty. ”

would have a prison record by the time they are in their mid-thirties.

Now, consider a birth cohort born in the late 1970s. This is a group of people who are reaching their mid-thirties in 2009. They are growing up through the period of the American prison boom. For non-college African American men, which is about half of all black men, we estimate that 36 percent have been to prison. If they dropped out of high school, we estimate that 70 percent of those black men with very low levels of schooling have been to prison by their mid-thirties.

So within a generation, incarceration has become pervasive for African American men with very low levels of schooling. I should add that this is happening at a time when crime rates are at their lowest level since the 1960s. This is the product of policy change. There was a revolution in criminal justice policy in which prison time became the presumptive sentence for a felony offense.

A whole research program in the social sciences grew up around this stylized fact of pervasive incarceration, particularly in the African American community and particularly among men with low levels of schooling. People looked at labor market outcomes after incarceration. How did formerly incarcerated people do in terms of their employment and earnings? What was the effect of incarceration on their health? What was the effect of incarceration on family life? What was the effect of incarceration on the children of incarcerated parents? Were these effects intergenerational?

The research literature is complicated because there is an enormous amount of non-random selection associated with incarceration. But if I could summarize this literature in a sentence it would be the following: Mass incarceration criminalized a variety of social problems that were related to racial inequality and poverty. Now, some of these social problems included problems of serious violence. But they weren't limited to problems of serious violence. They also included things like untreated mental illness, untreated addiction, and homelessness. These were all swept up in the American prison boom.

So mass incarceration criminalized social problems related to racial inequality and poverty on a historically unprecedented scale. We have seen evidence of that. And because there were a variety of negative social and economic effects associated with incarceration – such as diminished earnings, diminished employment, family disruption, and diminished well-being of children – mass incarceration tended to contribute to the reproduction of poverty and racial inequality. Incarceration was concentrated among the most disadvantaged segments of the population. Its negative social and economic effects were concentrated there as well. And inequality writ large tended to be reproduced and sustained over the life course, impacting one generation to the next.

A lot of this research was summarized in a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report. I was fortunate to participate on a panel that worked on this report. I want to acknowledge Robert Sampson, who is in the audience tonight, who was also on that panel. I think it is fair to say that we worked pretty hard on this report. If you are not familiar with the National Academy's process, a group of scholars are empaneled and they meet together for eighteen to twenty-four months. They work intensively, comb through the scientific literature, arrive at a consensus, and conclude that more research is needed. This is the normal life cycle of a NAS consensus panel report.

As we reviewed the research we were seized with a sense of urgency. And we concluded that given the small crime prevention effects of long prison sentences and the possibly high financial, social, and human costs of incarceration, federal and state policy-makers should revise current criminal justice policies to significantly reduce the rate of incarceration in the United States. So the headline recommendation is this: we have to reduce incarceration rates in America. We are so far out of line with international and historic norms. And the evidence of social damage is enough to warrant a significant policy reversal.

Around the time of the *Dædalus* issue on mass incarceration in 2010, I was trying to understand the effects of incarceration on labor markets and families. I was crunching away at these big social science data sets. And at that time, I was teaching in prison, and I was hearing lots of stories. And the stories were more complicated than the empirical analysis I was conducting.

I was worried that the work that I was doing on these big social science data sets was not capturing the complexity of people's lives that were

increasingly being revealed to me as I got to know my students and the people in and around the criminal justice system. I worried that I was reducing people to four variables: age, sex, race, and education. And the lives that they were telling me about were much more complicated than that. I knew that the people involved in the criminal justice system were often homeless. They weren't living in traditional households. And big data social survey methods have a lot of trouble appropriately covering segments of the population that are not living in stable households.

So my data were not fully reflecting the life experiences of people who were caught up in the system. I worried that the kinds of research findings we were generating – negative employment effects, increased family disruption, diminished well-being of children with incarcerated parents – were not sufficiently detailed to tell us what we should do. I remember a meeting in 2010 in which the Obama White House convened scholars working on the impact of incarceration on children. John Hagan from Northwestern ran the meeting. The group working on that problem at the time was relatively small and we were all analyzing the same data: the Fragile Families Data Set, which is a wonderful data set but it is not designed to understand the experiences of people involved in the criminal justice system.

We spent the first half day in Washington talking about all the negative effects of incarceration on kids. There were a lot of Feds at the meeting. A woman from the Department of Education raised her hand and said, “Okay. I’ve listened to all this research for hours now. I’m a teacher in a classroom, and I learn that a student has a parent who is incarcerated. What should I do?” You could hear a pin drop in that room. We had no clue. The kinds of empirical materials we were studying were not providing us with any guidance for that reasonable, very practical, and very urgent question. And that was a warning flag for me. I needed to change something. I was determined to change my methodology, but I’m sure that is not all I needed to change.

Act Two: The Boston Reentry Study. Anthony Braga (at the time he was at the Kennedy School; he is now Dean of the Criminal Justice School at Northeastern) and I were riding the bus back from MCI-Norfolk where we had been teaching a class – our junior tutorial with our Harvard undergrads

and the BU students who were incarcerated at Norfolk. I remember saying to Anthony, “I think we have to do a reentry study in Boston. I’m worried that we are not really seeing the full complexity of people’s lives.” But the problem with a reentry study is you cannot keep track of people. The retention rate is 50 percent in most reentry studies because the researchers generally cannot find half of the sample.

“ We have to reduce incarceration rates in America. We are so far out of line with international and historic norms. And the evidence of social damage is enough to warrant a significant policy reversal.

Anthony, who knew Boston very well, said, “I reckon I could keep track of everyone.” And so we embarked on the Boston Reentry Study. It was a cohort study conducted in collaboration with Anthony Braga and Rhiana Kohl, my collaborator from the Department of Corrections in Massachusetts. Rhiana runs a research unit at DOC in Massachusetts and she was really an extraordinary partner. We had unbelievable buy-in and access. We went into eighteen prisons in the Massachusetts system: minimum security, maximum security, as well as the state psychiatric hospital at Bridgewater. We interviewed people in offices, in classrooms, and in non-contact units behind plexiglass.

This was a cohort study with 122 men and women. They entered the study a week before their prison release. The only criteria to be eligible for the study was that you needed to be returning to a neighborhood in the Boston area. We asked a lot of questions about employment, housing, health, family relationships, drug use, crime, and contact with the justice system. It is a rich data set, and we are still going through it. A large number of papers have come out of it.

Let me highlight three findings of the study. The first one was unexpected. We interviewed our research subjects over a year, following them in the first year after they are released from prison. We spoke to them one week before prison release, one

week after prison release, then two months later, six months later, and finally twelve months later. We had five long interviews over this one-year follow-up period. As we got to know them, they began to share stories about their exposure to violence and other trauma, which often began at a very early age.

Some of the people in our sample were perpetrators of serious violence, and that is why they were incarcerated. A lot of people spoke to us about exposure to violence as victims and as witnesses. The people in our sample had witnessed violence on many occasions – often in their family home at very young ages. So there is very deep trauma in the sample. By the time we got to our exit interviews, we had redesigned our survey instrument to dig more deeply into this question of trauma.

Our second finding is that people coming out of prison are in poor physical and mental health. They have chronic conditions, such as diabetes, and suffer from depression, anxiety, and PTSD. About 15 percent of our sample reported to us that they had a diagnosis of a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, or bipolar disorder.

Our third finding is that after prison, there is intense poverty and material hardship. The average income in our sample in the year after incarceration was \$6,500 – about half the federal poverty threshold for an individual living alone. Poverty

People coming out of prison are in poor physical and mental health. They have chronic conditions, such as diabetes, and suffer from depression, anxiety, and PTSD. ”

researchers call this a level of deep poverty. Insecure housing was ubiquitous. No one in the sample had independent housing in the entire year after prison. This meant that they were doubled up with family, or they were in transitional housing, or in the shelter system, or homeless at some point in the year after their prison release.

What does childhood trauma look like? We asked questions such as did someone in your family have a serious drug problem? Were you beaten by your parents? Have you ever witnessed a death? Forty percent of our sample before their eighteenth birthday had witnessed someone being killed. That

is a tremendously high level of exposure to violence as a witness. Parents had lost custody of our respondents in about 40 percent of the cases. Sometimes this meant juvenile justice incarceration in which the state has custody during that time. About 40 percent of our respondents had a family member who was the victim of a serious crime. They also reported domestic violence, depression, and suicidal family members. About 15 percent of our respondents said they were sexually abused as kids.

What about health status? About 60 percent said drugs or alcohol were a problem for them, so there is a very high rate of substance abuse. They also have high rates of depression. There is a lot of chronic pain in the sample, and this was often associated with sustained drug use. Twenty percent reported having anxiety, and about 15 percent said they had a serious mental illness and had reported a psychotic condition.

With this data, we can create an index of childhood trauma. We called these physical and mental health problems “human frailty.” And the interesting thing that we found is that trauma in childhood is positively related to poor physical and mental health in adulthood. That is, people exposed in childhood to the greatest trauma are suffering the most serious health problems as adults. And if they reported to us specifically that they were abused in childhood, they were more likely than not to be in poor health – exceeding even the expectation given their level of trauma in childhood.

Now how is this all related to reentry the year after prison release? If you divide the sample in half between those who were frail, meaning they reported having physical and mental health problems, and those who were not frail, those in the poorest health were most likely to be using cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamine in the year after prison. They were most likely to have very high levels of housing insecurity. They were jobless. Employment improves over the year after prison. We are measuring employment in a very permissive way: meaning any income at all from paid work in the month before the survey. But employment problems are most serious for people in the poorest health. And people with work-limiting disabilities experienced high levels of joblessness.

So the statistics tell one story of the kind of hardship people experience after prison, but the lives of the people we interviewed tell another. I tried to portray many of these stories in a new book entitled *Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison*.

In the book, I argued that the social world in which mass incarceration lives is characterized

by three things: racial inequality, poverty, and violence. Tracing the transition from prison to community there are clear guides for policy here: good reentry policy should provide healthcare, housing, and income support. These are the most urgent needs, and the biggest challenges to social integration after prison.

Politically this is very challenging, because crime politics is deeply racialized and there is also an undeniable reality. The people whom we would like public policy to help have in many cases seriously harmed others. For liberal criminal justice reformers, the issue of violence poses a significant challenge.

[Editor's note: Bruce Western shows the audience a video clip of one of the respondents from the study talking about violence and incarceration.]

The stories that I hear show how violence is sustained over a lifetime, how prison is itself a source of violence in people's lives. This raises the question for me whether incarceration on a massive scale can ever be a successful anti-violence strategy.

So we need to ask, if not incarceration, what? The reentry study taught me something about the real conditions of the lives of people who are deeply involved in the criminal justice system. I think the challenge of finding justice involves promoting healing in a family or a community after someone has seriously harmed someone else. This means strengthening the intimate ties of family, friendship, work, and community, and not severing them in the way that incarceration does.

In this vision, public policy is serving a more fundamental purpose. Public policy in the aftermath of violence and other harms involves supporting a very human process of transformation.

[Editor's note: Bruce Western shows the audience another video clip of a man talking about his son after his son's brother was shot and killed in a Dorchester neighborhood in Boston.]

The great paradox of mass incarceration is that it demands heroic feats of personal transformation from people whose agency is often compromised by trauma and frailty. I could talk to you a lot more about reentry policies and programs, but at the human level I think we need justice policy to welcome and secure a place for those who have been drawn into violence, whether it is the violence of street crime or the state violence of mass incarceration. This is how a community plays its part in personal transformation.

I want to tell one last story that I hope can provoke our imaginations. I was in Addis Ababa a few years ago for a research project that is studying justice institutions in Ethiopia. I was at dinner with two Ethiopian researchers. One of them, Mulagetta, told me about a colleague, a German anthropologist, at his research institute. One day the anthropologist was out in a remote area driving through a small village. His car tragically struck a small child, killing her. The girl's parents ran outside to see what happened and a crowd quickly formed around the anthropologist. The parents tended to the child. The anthropologist asked that the police be called,

“The stories that I hear show how violence is sustained over a lifetime, how prison is itself a source of violence in people's lives. This raises the question for me whether incarceration on a massive scale can ever be a successful anti-violence strategy.”

but he was told that there were no police here. The village dealt with matters like this by itself. The anthropologist was told he could go, but they would send for him in a few days. He returned to Addis, and later that week a message came for him that he must return to the village. He was told that he must return alone. He went to my friend Mulagetta and asked what he should do. Mulagetta said, “You have to go back to the village.” So he went back to the village. When he got there he was escorted to a meeting with the elders of the village. First, he was told to pay 2,500 Birr (about \$125) to the family of the dead child. Next, he was ordered to buy a goat for the family. He purchased the goat, which was then immediately slaughtered. The father of the dead child was then called to the front of the meeting. The anthropologist, already standing at the front of the room, was told to hold out his hand. He held out his hand, and his wrist was bound to the wrist of the child's father with the entrails of the goat. The village elder then announced that the anthropologist was now a member of the dead girl's family. And that was that. He was free to go.

The anthropologist returned to Addis very upset. He felt that he hadn't properly compensated the family, nor had he been punished. Mulagetta said, "You have to understand, for the rest of your life you are now part of that man's family. You have all the obligations of a family member. You have to visit from time to time. If they are going through problems, you should help them just as a member of their own family would."

Western ideas about punishment and retribution were radically absent in this case of customary justice. Like the Ethiopian story, the problem of prisoner reentry raises the question of when does punishment end. When and how are debts extinguished? These questions are as ethical as they are empirical. If research is to help answer these questions, researchers too must take an ethical attitude to their work.

Let me share some concluding thoughts. The world in which the criminal justice system operates lies at the intersection of poverty, racial inequality, and violence. And this world is suffused with moral complexity. Who is a victim? Who is an offender? Who is strong? Who is weak? There are no easy answers to any of these questions. So how do we make judgments? How do we as researchers help inform policy? What is going to heal? What is fair?

The answer, I think, involves two ideas. First, researchers who are interested in this kind of project must be clear and intellectually serious about their value commitments. If we want our research to make a positive difference in the world, we have to be honest and transparent about our value commitments. This is very discomfoting for social science. This would have been a very discomfoting proposition for me ten years ago. Since Max Weber we have been taught that science as a vocation is a value-free endeavor. After we choose our research questions, values are a source of bias and mark our loss of objectivity.

In the area of criminal justice policy, I have never encountered value-free social science, and I do not believe it exists. So I offer transparency and intellectual seriousness as an alternative. Proclaim your values and elaborate them. If you are studying justice, how could you do otherwise? For those who study the courts, prisons, and the communities that are most heavily incarcerated, two values are fundamental: human dignity and social justice.

Human dignity expresses the imperative of each individual's humanity – their innate capacity for love and creativity – that is not forfeited no matter

their conduct or their punishment. The value of human dignity is expressed, for example, through the Eighth Amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment. Social justice says public policy should promote a fair distribution of rights, resources, and opportunities. A criminal justice system that disproportionately punishes communities of color violates the value of social justice.

Second, the work that we do tries to bear witness in dark places. And to do this work in often very challenging settings – solitary confinement units, psychiatric hospitals, maximum security prisons – we have to aim for the highest scientific standards. And often that is a very technical endeavor. Our sampling designs have to be informative. Our instruments have to minimize measurement error. So good science in this setting is no enemy of strong values. And often I think we make the mistake of saying those two things are in tension. Strong values are indispensable to good science.

We should view our empirical work as a test of our values. If prison reentry leaves people homeless without medical care, we are failing the value of human dignity. If the burdens of mass incarceration are concentrated in black communities, we are failing social justice. In my area, for research to serve justice we must confront the real stories of those who have been incarcerated. Our research and its design are important here because they shape what we see and who we hear. We have to go into the field to get proximity. This is a question of research design, but it also has ethical implications. What do we see? Who do we hear? If this work is really bearing witness in dark places, we will be drawn into rich layers of relationships that lie outside the university. We will be one voice among many. And we will offer one kind of expertise among many kinds of expertise. We will learn to speak as readily about our values as our research methods.

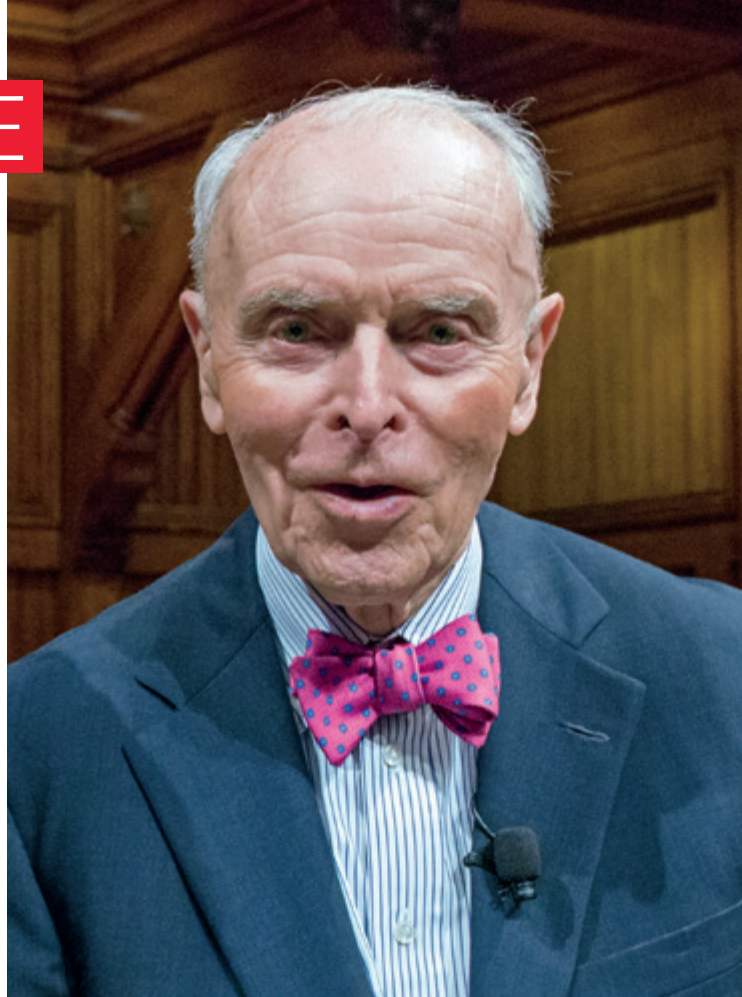
Ultimately, I think a project like this should provoke the imagination, much like the Ethiopian story that I shared with you. By testing our values against the real conditions of poverty, racial inequality, and violence that surround mass incarceration I hope that we might ultimately imagine a better path to justice.

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To view or listen to the presentation, visit www.amacad.org/events/criminal-justice-social-justice

In Memoriam: John (Jack) Francis Cogan, Jr. (1926–2020)



Jack Cogan was a man for whom the phrase “a giant of a gentleman” was the perfect description. He had many passions and hobbies – in business and politics, for social causes and cultural institutions – and he cared deeply about all of them, giving his life’s work to contributing to their success. He was a man of sound judgment and fairness as well as a catalyst for action. Known for the twinkle in his eye, a welcoming smile, and elegant, jaunty bow ties, Jack would enliven a room by entering it.

A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, and a 2009 Harvard Medal recipient, Jack was a brilliant thinker, a leader in the Boston business community, and an impassioned philanthropist. He joined the law firm Hale and Dorr (now WilmerHale) in 1952, and during his long career with the firm he served as Managing Partner and Chairman. He also had a parallel career in the financial services industry, working as a top official in the asset management firm Pioneer Investments, now Amundi Pioneer Asset Management. He also served as Chairman of the Investment Company Institute, where he was a member of the Board of Governors and the Executive Committee.

Jack’s strong belief in contributing to his community and to the vitality of local cultural institutions propelled him to be a leader in the Boston arts world. He chaired the Board of Trustees at the Museum of Fine

Arts, Boston and served as Vice Chairman of the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Board of Trustees and as a member of its Board of Overseers. He also served on numerous other boards, including as Chair of the Trustees of what is now the Boston Medical Center.

Always a visionary, Jack was generous, caring, thoughtful, and kind. A challenge stimulated him, and he worked tirelessly to find positive solutions to any issue before him. He encouraged people and institutions to recognize their worth and options and to reach for the highest standards in attaining their goals.

Jack was elected to the Academy in 2005 and became a member of the Academy Trust that same year. He was a long-time member of the Finance Committee, the Audit Committee, and the Development & Communications Committee. He was active in all aspects of Academy life, supporting its work and activities. The Academy was the beneficiary of his wisdom, experience, and breadth of knowledge. I along with his many friends and colleagues will miss his wise counsel and gentle nature.

Jack died on January 24, 2020. A devoted husband, father, and grandfather, he is survived by his wife, Mary Cornille, three sons and one daughter, and nine grandchildren.

Susan W. Paine

Select Prizes and Awards to Members

Kristi Anseth (University of Colorado Boulder) is the recipient of the L'Oreal-UNESCO for Women in Science Award.

Hari Balakrishnan (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was named a 2020 Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

Brian Berry (University of Texas at Dallas) is the recipient of the 2020 Stanley Brunn Award for Creativity in Geography from the American Association of Geographers.

David Blight (Yale University) was awarded the Gold Medal for History by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Lonnie G. Bunch III (Smithsonian Institution) received a 2020 Dan David Prize.

Geoffrey W. Coates (Cornell University) received the 2020 Gustavus John Esselen Award for Chemistry in the Public Interest from the American Chemical Society.

Lizabeth Cohen (Harvard University) was awarded the 2020 Bancroft Prize in American History and Diplomacy for *Saving America's Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age*.

Robert Crabtree (Yale University) won the 2019–2020 American Chemical Society/Société Chimique de France Franco-American Chemistry Prize.

Hillel Furstenberg (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) was awarded the 2020 Abel Prize in Mathematics. He shares the award with **Gregory A. Margulis** (Yale University).

Robert G. Gallager (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was awarded the 2020 Japan Prize.

Melinda Gates (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) was awarded the 2020 Radcliffe Medal.

Peter Hotez (Baylor College of Medicine) was named a Faculty Fellow of the Hagler Institute for Advanced Study at Texas A&M University.

Kathleen Howell (Purdue University) was named a Faculty Fellow of the Hagler Institute for Advanced Study at Texas A&M University.

Susan Hubbard (Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory) was elected to the National Academy of Engineering.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson (University of Pennsylvania) was awarded the 2020 Public Welfare Medal by the National Academy of Sciences.

Eugenia Kalnay (University of Maryland) was awarded the 2019 Roger Revelle Medal by the American Geophysical Union.

Henry C. Kapteyn (University of Colorado Boulder) is the recipient of the 2020 Benjamin Franklin Medal in Physics from the Franklin Institute. He shares the award with **Margaret M. Murnane** (University of Colorado Boulder).

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (New York University; POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews) received a 2020 Dan David Prize.

Leonard Kleinrock (University of California, Los Angeles) was awarded the UCLA Medal.

Arthur D. Levinson (Calico Life Sciences) is the recipient of the 2020 Bower Award for Business Leadership from the Franklin Institute.

Jane Lubchenco (Oregon State University) was awarded the Mary Sears Medal by the Oceanography Society.

Misha Lyubich (Stony Brook University) was named a Faculty Fellow of the Hagler Institute for Advanced Study at Texas A&M University.

Gregory A. Margulis (Yale University) was awarded the 2020 Abel Prize in Mathematics. He shares the award with **Hillel Furstenberg** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

C. Daniel Mote (University of Maryland; National Academy of Engineering) is the recipient of the 2020 Benjamin Franklin Medal in Mechanical Engineering from the Franklin Institute.

Margaret M. Murnane (University of Colorado Boulder) is the recipient of the 2020 Benjamin Franklin Medal in Physics from the Franklin Institute. She shares the award with **Henry C. Kapteyn** (University of Colorado Boulder).

Jeremy Nathans (Johns Hopkins Medical School) is the recipient of the 2020 Benjamin Franklin Medal in Life Science from the Franklin Institute.

William Nordhaus (Yale University) is the recipient of the 2020 Daniel Patrick Moynihan Prize, given by the American Academy of Political and Social Science.

Svante Pääbo (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology) was awarded the 2020 Japan Prize.

Michele Parrinello (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich) is the recipient of the 2020 Benjamin Franklin Medal in Chemistry from the Franklin Institute. He shares the award with Roberto Car (Princeton University).

Barbara H. Partee (University of Massachusetts Amherst) is the recipient of the 2020 Benjamin Franklin Medal in Computer and Cognitive Science from the Franklin Institute.

Richard Powers (Stanford University) has been awarded the William Dean Howells Medal by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Michael Putnam (Brown University) received the 125th Anniversary Medal from the American Academy in Rome.

John A. Quelch (University of Miami) is the recipient of the 2020 Marketing For A Better World Award from the American Marketing Association Foundation.

Geri Richmond (University of Oregon) was named an Oregon History Maker by the Oregon Historical Society.

John W. Rogers, Jr. (Ariel Investments) received a 2020 ROBIE Achievement in Industry Award from the Jackie Robinson Foundation.

Peter Shor (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was named a Faculty Fellow of the Hagler Institute for Advanced Study at Texas A&M University.

James Truran (University of Chicago) was awarded the 2020 Laboratory Astrophysics Prize by the Laboratory Astrophysics Division of the American Astronomical Society.

New Appointments

James Allison (University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center) has been appointed to the Editorial Advisory Board of *The Scientist*.

Nancy C. Andrews (Duke University School of Medicine) has been appointed to the Board of Directors of Charles River Laboratories International Inc.

Ronald J. Daniels (Johns Hopkins University) has been appointed to the Board of Directors of BridgeBio Pharma, Inc.

Harry Elam (Stanford University) has been named President of Occidental College.

Alan Gerber (Yale University) has been named Director of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale.

Laurie H. Glimcher (Dana-Farber Cancer Institute; Harvard Medical School) was appointed to the Scientific Advisory Committee of Stand Up To Cancer.

Annette Gordon-Reed (Harvard University) was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

Paula Hammond (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was appointed to the Board of Directors of Alecator, Inc.

Susan Hockfield (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was elected to the Board of Directors of Pfizer Inc.

Jonathan Holloway (Northwestern University) was named President of Rutgers University. He was also elected to the Board of Trustees of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Eric Horvitz (Microsoft Research) has been appointed Chief Scientific Officer of Microsoft.

Takeo Kanade (Carnegie Mellon University) has been appointed to the Advisory Board of Proprio.

Mary-Claire King (University of Washington) has been appointed to the Editorial Advisory Board of *The Scientist*.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (New York University; POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews) has been named the Ronald S. Lauder Chief Curator of POLIN Museum's Core Exhibition.

Bill McKibben (Middlebury College) has joined the Board of the Global Warming Mitigation Project.

Robert Schreiber (Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine) has joined the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research.

Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (University of California, Los Angeles) has been named Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Joseph S. Takahashi (University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center) has been appointed to the Editorial Advisory Board of *The Scientist*.

We invite all Fellows and International Honorary Members to send notices about their recent and forthcoming publications, new appointments, exhibitions and performances, films and documentaries, and honors and prizes to bulletin@amacad.org.

Shirley Tilghman (Princeton University) has been appointed Senior Science Advisor to the Science Philanthropy Alliance.

Select Publications

POETRY

Jane Hirshfield (San Francisco, California). *Ledger*. Knopf, March 2020

FICTION

J.M. Coetzee (University of Adelaide). *The Death of Jesus: A Novel*. Viking, May 2020

Jules Feiffer (Shelter Island, New York). *Smart George*. Michael di Capua Books, June 2020

Anne Tyler (Baltimore, Maryland). *Redhead by the Side of the Road*. Knopf, April 2020

NONFICTION

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THE ACADEMY ITS FUTURE



A \$100 Million Campaign for the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

FOR 240 YEARS, the nation has looked to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to offer wisdom and insight into the most profound issues of the time. In 1780, that was the formation of a free republic. In the 1850s, it was understanding the changing natural environment through the theory of evolution. In 1960, it was the creation and exploration of a field called arms control – in fact, the Academy coined that term. Today, it includes such questions as how we can sustain the dream of American democracy in the face of widening divides; and how as citizens of our planet we can respond to environmental change and its implications for migration, conflict, public health, and natural resources in order to provide for a more promising global future.

Numbering nearly 6,000 of the nation's and world's most accomplished individuals, Academy members combine their extraordinary expertise and convene other critical stakeholders to put informed recommendations in the hands of those on the front lines of these issues. Though this kind of independent, balanced, and nonpartisan resource is perhaps needed now more than ever, the Academy stands among very few organizations that have the intellectual stature, interdisciplinary representation, and convening power to provide it.

WE HAVE LAUNCHED A \$100 MILLION CAMPAIGN to build a sustainable financial future for the Academy to continue to serve as a source of knowledge on topics and activities of the greatest global significance.

Importantly, the Campaign for The Academy & Its Future builds on essential strengths and priorities identified through our recent strategic plan:

- **UPHOLD INDEPENDENT INQUIRY:** Examine the most pressing challenges of the time and seek solutions with urgency and independence.
- **ACHIEVE GREATER INFLUENCE AND IMPACT:** Offer policy-makers, scholars, the media, philanthropists, and those in the public and

private sectors the benefit of the Academy's intellectual capital in the ways it can be of greatest service.

- **ENCOMPASS MORE VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES:** Purposefully increase the diversity of perspectives that shape the Academy's work through inclusivity of members, staff, contributors, and audiences.

Philanthropic support from foundations and individuals has long fostered our ability to be independent, interdisciplinary, and innovative. As the challenges that we face today – and our aspirations to address these challenges – outpace our existing resources, we seek to ensure our continued stability and growth in the following ways:

- **DOUBLE THE ACADEMY'S ENDOWMENT** from \$35 to \$70 million to enable continuity of long-term programs, provide the flexibility to explore new ideas and launch promising initiatives, and pursue opportunities to increase the Academy's visibility and impact.
- **SECURE PROGRAM GRANTS AND MAJOR GIFTS** totaling \$43.5 million to fund a growing portfolio of influential initiatives.
- **GROW UNRESTRICTED ANNUAL SUPPORT** by increasing the participation of the members and affiliate institutions so that the Academy can respond to immediate needs and opportunities.

The Campaign for The Academy & Its Future, cochaired by Louise Henry Bryson and David M. Rubenstein, has raised over \$60 million and is scheduled to conclude in June 2022.

You can add your support at amacad.org/donate or by contacting the Academy's Development Office (617-576-5066; dev@amacad.org).





[Drawing of a ferry-boat] addressed to James Bowdoin, September 16, 1786

In September 1786, John Gardiner (1737–1793) of Boston sent Academy President James Bowdoin a drawing and description of a ferry in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, designed by Nicholas Garrison, a member of the Moravian Brethren. The ferry used a rope or cable and the river’s current to move the boat back and forth, and the design could be upscaled for larger crossings through a series of blocks and pulleys.

In his letter, Gardiner wrote that the drawing itself “sufficiently explains the easy Transfir [sic] of the Boat over the River, and, if properly attended to, may be of general use to mankind.” He later supplemented the drawing with a description of the design, providing additional details on how to employ the system for a wider body of water.

“Suppose a Ship at Anchor in a River with a strong stream, If the helm be put a port, the Vessel will shear to the Starboard Shore, as far as her cable will let her. The Rudder is not the Cause, but the Stream;

for if I fasten a Rope, or Spring, to the Cable and fasten it to her Stern, letting out a little Cable, she will Shear in like manner without the Rudder.

Again, Suppose a River a Mile wide (which is too wide for a Rope) I’ll get a Chain the Length of the width of the River, and one End being fastened to a sufficient Anchor, place the same in the middle of the River, its whole Length & more, above the intended Ferry, and take a sufficient Number of Boats (say 12) to bear up the said Chain. . . . To the other End of the Chain which will be at the last Boat, I would fasten a Rope or Pendant of 5 or 6 Fathom ^long, and to that a Guy to which a Flat or Scow is fastened . . . if I draw in 2 or three fathom of one of them, or let out as much of one of them, the one Guy becomes so much shorter or longer than the other and will put the Flat in another position and in motion.”

(Letter from Nicholas Garrison to John Gardiner, January 4, 1787)

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The views expressed in the *Bulletin* are those held by each contributor and are not necessarily those of the Board of Directors and Members of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

ONLINE

If you follow the Academy on Twitter, @americanacad, then you are enjoying artistic endeavors of members using social media to share creativity and solace with the world.



For instance, **Yo-Yo Ma** started the hashtag **#songsofcomfort** to share music with those on the frontlines fighting the pandemic as well as those staying at home. He launched the initiative, which many others have joined, by tweeting his performance of Dvořák's *Going Home*.



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