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New EAG brings working parents issues to the forefront

By Claire Kelly

In 2019, Foreign Service Officer Laura Thibault started a support group for working parents with an email listserv called Working Parents @ State (WP@S). The group quickly became an advocacy engine when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. With childcare centers closing, and the effects of the pandemic on children yet unknown, it became clear from conversations on the listserv that parents were in an untenable situation juggling demands at work, virtual learning for their children, and constant decisions that impacted the health of their families. WP@S members Claire Kelly, Elana Mendelson, and Michelle Romo drafted a letter to the under secretary for management detailing these concerns and advocating for flexibilities like COVID-19 administrative leave and expanded core hours. In a matter of days, hundreds of employees signed the letter. The three fellow parents then turned their advocacy to Capitol Hill and, with other WP@S members, on their personal time, lobbied for COVID-19 administrative leave and support like the emergency paid sick leave.

Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (on the basis of sex, as female and male caregivers) and E.O. 13152 parents are protected from discrimination. Time and again employees reached out to WP@S leadership to seek advice on discrimination they were facing as parents in this new landscape and on how to

access the resources needed to balance work and family. Recognizing the importance of inclusion of parents in the workplace, Mendelson, Kelly, Romo, and Thibault applied for WP@S to become an Employee Affinity Group (EAG) in March 2021. After a hard-fought battle, the Department of State's newest EAG was approved on January 24, 2022. Mendelson, Kelly, Romo, Thibault, and Ioana DiFiore are the interim board of WP@S, whose mission is to advocate for parents and work with other EAGs and leadership throughout the Department on retention and inclusion of parent-employees.

As the pandemic has continued, parents, especially mothers and women of color, are leaving the workforce in alarming numbers—largely due to the childcare crisis. Almost 16,000 childcare facilities have closed permanently since the start of the pandemic and those facilities that have been able to remain open often offer reduced hours and suffer from severe staffing shortages. On top of that, necessary COVID-19 protocols result in centers and schools being shut down frequently. The Department's backup care benefit, an essential employee resource for nearly a decade and a lifeline during ongoing COVID-19 closures, was drastically cut in fiscal year 2022. WP@S is currently proposing a number of policy changes that would assist parent employees.

As a new group, WP@S is making headway in creating an equal and inclusive workforce where all parents can achieve their career and family goals. To join the group, employees may subscribe to the listserv here or contact WP@S leadership.

Claire Kelly is an attorney-advisor in the Office of the Legal Adviser for Consular Affairs.

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Young voices honor the fallen

Local children sing the U.S. national anthem at Flanders Field American Cemetery in Waregem, Belgium, during the last in-person Memorial Day ceremony before it shifted online for two years during the pandemic, May 26, 2019. Photo by Serge Vandendriessche

By Danielle Smith-Llera

This Memorial Day, a tradition returns in-person to Flanders Field American Cemetery in Belgium. It's not a spectacular fly-over like Charles Lindberg's in 1927 when he dropped red poppies from the "Spirit of St. Louis" over the gathering, but a century-old commemoration that is iconic among residents of nearby Waragem and all who come to honor the fallen World War I American soldiers buried there. Whether in late May heat or downpour, local Dutch-speaking school children have been singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at ceremonies since 1919—except during World War II—tackling the song's challenging octaves acapella. Even during the recent pandemic, small groups continued to learn and perform the U.S. national anthem before virtual audiences.

This annual performance so authentically captures the bilateral relationship that it has earned the respect and affection of Embassy Brussels's public affairs staff, who work hard to engage audiences in shared U.S.-Belgian history.

"[It has] grown naturally and spontaneously out of the local community," said Cultural Affairs Supervisor Brian Dick, who noted Waragem's current mayor participated in the event as a child.

This momentum has depended on generations of Waragem children, teachers, and supporters, and it will require efforts by many more to continue. After two decades of helping plan the ceremonies, Dick said, “The program doesn’t change, just the people do.”

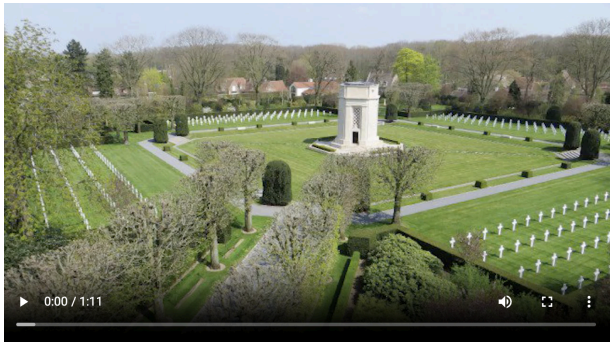
The last live public performance by the children of Waregem was captured by Multimedia Specialist Serge Vandendriessche from Embassy Belgium’s public affairs staff on May 26, 2019. The event is scheduled to gather in-person again on Memorial Day 2022.

Traditionally, embassy and military officials individually thank the young performers following each annual performance, and before the solemn ceremony continues. Given the historical context—the ultimate sacrifice made by 368 American men during the last brutal weeks of the European war—the images from this event hold symbolic power.

“Many of the soldiers buried here were just kids themselves,” said Vandendriessche. “They enlisted because they believed freedom was worth fighting for.”

Each year, as poppies start to bloom, a new group of Waragem children will continue to sing in their honor.

Danielle Smith-Llera is a public affairs associate at Embassy Brussels.



[video] Local school children sing the U.S. national anthem in Memorial Day ceremonies at Flanders Field American Cemetery in Waregem, Belgium, to honor American World War II servicemen buried there, 2016. The tradition has taken place every year since 1919, except during WWII. Video by Serge Vandendriessche

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Panel event aims to recruit women in engineering and cybersecurity

Acting Office Director for Security Technology Tamika Abbott (left) and Engineering Services Center Officer in Charge Reginald Williams (center) showcase the technical systems laboratory space during a visit by Assistant Secretary Gentry Smith (right) to the Florida Regional Center in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Oct. 21. Photo by Eric Weiner

By Kris Sivertson

Recruiting the next generation of security engineering officers (SEO) is a critical need for the Foreign Service and a top priority for the Bureau of Global Talent Management's (GTM) Recruitment Division and the Diplomatic Security Service's (DSS) Recruitment Unit. Kris Sivertson, the diplomat in residence (DIR) for Texas, came up with an innovative approach to encourage women to apply for this dynamic career. She partnered with the DSS Recruitment Unit to host a Women's History Month panel on March 9 featuring Joy Baca-Herrera, an SEO who is serving on an excursion tour to the Bureau of Legislative Affairs as a senior congressional advisor, and Monique Theriot, who is serving as an SEO in the Technology Development Branch. The panel highlighted the critical role of SEOs in protecting people, information, and facilities using their engineering skills, and explored the increasing nexus with cybersecurity.

Technology and security countermeasures are evolving, and an increasing intersection between the physical, technical, and cyber realms means the Department of State must attract diverse talent with in-demand engineering skills and the ability to expand their skill set in the cyber domain. To reach qualified individuals, GTM's Recruitment Division utilized direct candidate sourcing, outreach

to professional organizations for women in engineering, and extensive social media promotions. More than 270 interested prospects registered for the virtual panel in March to learn about the SEO position and hear from Theriot and Baca-Herrera about how they use their engineering and cybersecurity skills to protect the Department and the nation, at home and abroad. Sivertson encouraged Theriot and Baca-Herrara to share their paths to, and life in, the Foreign Service, and their advice to candidates interested in becoming an SEO. Participants enthusiastically engaged the panel with questions about their work, the Foreign Service, and how to apply.

Employee referrals remain a top source of information for interested applicants to learn about Department opportunities. Referrals can be made by contacting Diplomatic Security Recruitment or contact a local DIR.

Kris Sivertson is a supervisory special agent serving as the diplomat in residence for Texas in Global Talent Management's Recruitment Division.

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Embassy Stockholm celebrates International Women's Day

In honor of International Women's Day on March 8, U.S. Ambassador Erik Ramanathan (center) hosted a roundtable discussion with a diverse group of Swedish female leaders to discuss the shared goal of a more equal and just society. Photo by Jenny Sigurs

By Jacqueline Jin

International Women's Day, commemorated every year on March 8, is a time to reflect on the challenges women have overcome and on the obstacles and inequality they still face today. This year's theme, #BreakTheBias, was centered on eradicating stereotypes and discrimination, while imagining an inclusive world in which difference is celebrated rather than dismissed.

Ambassador Erik Ramanathan hosted a diverse group of Swedish female leaders where they discussed their organizations' accomplishments as well as the stereotypes and biases they still face, and their leadership goals for the next year. One guest viewed International Women's Day as "Feminist New Year's Eve," when all can reflect and look back at the progress made to date and set future goals. As female entrepreneurs, the guests discussed the challenges and frustrations of women-led companies receiving substantially less capital from investors as compared to male-led companies, even in a country as progressive as Sweden. Both the ambassador and the leaders agreed on the need for more role models and mentors.

The embassy hosted a separate discussion between Deputy Chief of Mission Pam Tremont and guest speaker Petra Tötterman Andorff, secretary general of Kvinna

till Kvinna (Woman to Woman). Both Tremont and Tötterman Androff discussed how their organizations can continue to break the bias and support women in the workplace to create better work-life balance. One employee noted that although many women are rising to the senior ranks today, many of them are still expected to take on a disproportionate share of duties at home.
The U.S. and Sweden can learn much from each other and can help one another further gender equality. Embassy Stockholm discussed future collaborations to support the advancement of women through public diplomacy programs and other opportunities.

Jacqueline Jin is an office management specialist for the political/economic section and volunteer Federal Women's Program coordinator at Embassy Stockholm.

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INL Pakistan supports female police officer recruitment efforts

Female officers of Pakistan's National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) stand in front of a new, INL-funded women's facility at the NHMP Training College in Sheikhupura, Pakistan on March 21. Photos by Mohammad Shaban

By Robert Pickett

One of the pillars of Mission Pakistan's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) section is to "enhance opportunities for women to access justice and to actively participate in the administration of justice." INL-Pakistan is helping to overcome barriers to gender inclusion, including in police recruitment. This is a major issue in Pakistan, where only 2% of law enforcement officers are women, a result of both cultural attitudes and limited police resources. One significant constraint to expanding the representation of women in law enforcement is a lack of women's facilities at police training schools, where local culture requires officers and trainees to live, and often eat, in gender-separated facilities. Women law enforcement officers may also need assistance caring for children while attending training. All of these represent major obstacles INL seeks to address through its assistance.

In 2018, INL initiated a program to address these challenges, donating more than ten million dollars for the construction of barracks and other facilities for women at 14 law enforcement training locations throughout Pakistan.

Earlier this year, INL successfully transferred one such facility to Pakistan's National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP). The new barracks can accommodate 100 female trainees and includes a dining hall, lactation room, and daycare facilities. Over the next five years, the facility will help the NHMP meet its goal of adding 1,200 new female officers, comprising 10% of all new recruits.

INL-Pakistan Director Mark Tervakoski summarized INL's goals for this and similar projects during the handover ceremony, March 21, 2022.

"As more Pakistani women join the ranks of officers, they will inevitably deepen police understanding of gender issues, and enhance the quality of service offered to Pakistanis of all genders," he said. "This makes not just women and children safer, but all of society."

Robert Pickett is the police assistance program officer in Embassy Islamabad's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement section.

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SPEC visits first net-zero diplomatic facility

From left: U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Ambassador John Hennessey-Niland, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry, Palau President Surangel Whipps Jr., and Paramount Chief Reklai Raphael Bao Ngirmang cut the ribbon for Embassy Koror's solar energy project, April 12. Photo courtesy of Embassy Koror

By Evan Lewis and Stephanie Christel

Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry joined Ambassador John Hennessey-Niland and the Embassy Koror team in Palau to visit a new photovoltaic installation that will make the embassy the first Net-Zero Energy U.S. diplomatic facility in the world.

The new solar power system is designed to provide 100% of the campus's annual energy needs, generating more than $100,000 of utility purchase savings during the first year of operation. The U.S. government is projected to save a net of $1.6 million after payback of design, installation, and maintenance costs. During the day, a surplus of power will be generated and sold to the local electricity grid. The campus will purchase energy from the grid when the solar panels do not provide sufficient power, such as at night or during bad weather—this method "turns back" the meter and effectively uses the local grid as a battery. The embassy will never purchase more energy than it has produced.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), in partnership with the Department of State's Greening Diplomacy Initiative, continues to address the climate crisis through projects that improve the resiliency and sustainability of diplomatic posts around the world. These efforts result in cutting-edge, renewable

infrastructure being installed at posts that can best use them, reducing carbon emissions, minimizing the Department's impact on local environments, and improving resilience to natural disasters. OBO currently hosts 46 renewable energy installations globally with a total capacity of approximately 10 megawatts. Another 30 are being planned, developed, or installed with a total capacity of 11.6 megawatts.

While Embassy Koror may be the first Net-Zero Energy U.S. diplomatic mission, it will certainly not be the last. Similar installations are underway at project sites around the world including at the U.S. embassies in Apia, Majuro, and Kolonia.

Evan Lewis is a media relations analyst at the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. Stephanie Christel is an eco-management analyst for the Greening Diplomacy Initiative within the Office of Management Strategy & Solutions.

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Office of Refugee Admissions: Welcoming the world's vulnerable upholds the highest values of U.S. foreign policy

Ambassador Julieta Valls Noyes (far left), then-nominee to be assistant secretary for population, refugees and migration, speaks with Department of State volunteers supporting Operation Allies Welcome at Dulles International Airport, Sept. 1, 2021. Photo by Isaac Pacheco

By Katherine Leahy

In August 2021, the entire world was watching as the city of Kabul fell and the U.S. government undertook the largest humanitarian airlift in its history. In just fifteen days, more than 75,000 Afghan nationals fled their homes and were evacuated to the United States. Most arrived, quite literally, with only the clothes on their backs and with an enormous challenge in front of them: starting a new life, unexpectedly and with little notice, in a distant country. What those images could not show were the millions of people just like them who, for over a century, have successfully sought refuge from persecution and safety from violence within the United States. As the Nazi regime rose to power in Germany, groups of concerned, private citizens assisted vulnerable scientists, artists, cultural leaders, and others to flee Europe for the United States. This expanded upon the work begun by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in the late 19th century to help Jews escape pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. That first refugee group included Lithuanian painter Marc Chagall and German political philosopher Hannah Arendt. Non-governmental organizations like the International Rescue Committee and Church World Service joined the effort as well, assisting thousands of European refugees to resettle in U.S. cities during

the war and in its immediate aftermath. The fall of Vietnam in 1975 and the subsequent influx of refugees from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and other southeast Asian nations at war prompted Congress to formalize the refugee admissions process. They did that with the Refugee Act of 1980, which paved the way for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

Today, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration's Office of Admissions (PRM/A), in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services, runs USRAP. Under the leadership of Office Director Larry Bartlett and Deputy Director Kelly Gauger, PRM/A's team of more than 30 Foreign and Civil Service officers work together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), other international organizations, nine refugee resettlement agency partners, state and local officials, and communities across the country to screen refugee resettlement applicants and process applications. These organizations also work to relocate and settle refugees within the United States, in welcoming communities with sufficient educational, health care, and employment resources to help them start new lives. Some of those partner agencies are the very same ones that helped facilitate the arrival of World War II refugees nearly eight decades ago, while others are newer partners, all working to help the U.S. government continue its proud history of welcoming the most vulnerable people.

The PRM/A Overseas Processing team oversees the refugee resettlement process from the time UNHCR refers a refugee for resettlement in the United States until they depart for the United States on IOM-arranged transportation. The section chief and the team of program officers and analysts work closely with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, PRM refugee coordinators at U.S. embassies, and the non-governmental and international organizations that manage seven PRM-funded resettlement support centers, ensuring each resettlement applicant is fully screened and matched with a U.S. resettlement agency before they depart for the United States.

The Domestic Program team, led by Section Chief Holly Herrera, oversees the second half of the resettlement process, starting when U.S. Customs and Border Protection admits a newly-arrived refugee at a port of entry through that individual's first 90 days in the local U.S. community where they resettle. Herrera and her team coordinate with the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Centers for Disease Control, domestic refugee resettlement agencies, and state and local governments and service providers to place refugees in communities across the country to ensure newly arrived refugees receive essential economic, social, and housing support to ease their transition into their new communities.

The Refugee Processing Center (RPC), led by Director Hilary Ingraham and Deputy Director Nicole Patel, is the bridge between the overseas and domestic processing functions. RPC develops and maintains the case management system and other tools used for processing refugees from initial referral overseas to final resettlement in the United States. The center also builds reporting to inform data-driven decisions, provide system security oversight and guidance across all aspects of the program, and conduct certain refugee processing activities such as coordinating approved applicants' assignment to domestic resettlement agencies. Finally, the Policy Team coordinates PRM/A's leadership of U.S. refugee resettlement policy formulation and implementation. Section Chief Cameron McGlothlin and his team prepare Department of State principals to represent the Department in interagency discussions, public engagements, and Congressional hearings on refugee resettlement policy, and work collaboratively with the overseas, domestic, and RPC teams on security vetting policy, privacy issues, and public and Congressional affairs. It also leads on global resettlement diplomacy, pressing other governments to make generous commitments to welcome refugees as a critical response to global displacement.

But even for a seasoned team of experts like PRM/A's, the Afghan relocation effort represented an extraordinary challenge. Faced with a global pandemic, a nationwide affordable housing shortage, and significant staffing gaps at resettlement agency affiliates, the PRM/A team worked around the clock to find innovative ways to accomplish the mission of processing and resettling 75,000 evacuated Afghan nationals into U.S. communities. They supported the resettlement agencies to expand their domestic networks, adding more than 150 new local affiliates and community partners in a matter of weeks. They brokered groundbreaking partnerships with other federal agencies, veterans' organizations, Afghan and Islamic coalitions, and nonprofits to build those institutions' capacity and resources to transition our Afghan guests to new resettlement communities by the mid-February 2022 deadline. And they facilitated the creation of the Sponsor Circle program, an initiative enabling groups of private individuals to sponsor Afghan refugees directly, outside of the formal refugee resettlement process. The Sponsor Circle program highlights the United States' long, proud history of refugee resettlement, echoing the early efforts of concerned private citizens to provide refuge and safety to the most vulnerable. Perhaps, and most importantly, all of these game-changing innovations will help strengthen and grow the global resettlement infrastructure, ensuring the Department can deliver on President Joe Biden's ambitious new refugee admissions targets for years to come.

“I have said it many times, but it is always worth repeating,” said PRM Assistant Secretary Julieta Valls Noyes. “As the daughter of Cuban refugees, my own story would not be possible without the work of dedicated professionals like PRM’s Admissions team. It is the great honor of my professional life to lead this bureau as we continue to rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and help the most vulnerable start writing their own American stories.”

Katherine Leahy is special assistant to the assistant secretary in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Secretary Antony J. Blinken (2nd from right) meets with recently resettled Afghans and staff members and volunteers from local refugee resettlement agencies in Alexandria, Va., Dec. 20, 2021. Photo by Freddie Everett

Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield (second from left) and Senator Mark Warner (center) commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service 2022 with a visit to Lutheran Immigrant Relief Services in Alexandria, Va. State Department photo

The December 2015 issue of State Magazine highlighted PRM’s U.S. Refugee Admissions Program as the Office of the Month.

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World's Fair Outreach: USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai share America's story

The Harlem Globetrotters wowed Expo audiences with their basketball tricks and entertaining skills during a cultural performance representing U.S. talent and diversity. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

By Nadia Ziyadeh

The USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai welcomed more than 1.25 million visitors between October 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022, sharing the story of ongoing American innovation. Despite a delayed opening due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Expo 2020 Dubai became the first World's Fair held in the Middle East. This Expo continued the long tradition of World Expos bringing people from every corner of the globe together to collaborate and share innovations. A total of 192 participating nations illustrated the Expo's theme, "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future" through their pavilion exhibitions, cultural programs, speakers, and visiting delegations.

The USA Pavilion's exhibition, "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of the Future" celebrated the American people, ideas, and contributions that have changed and improved lives in the United States and worldwide. Working closely with the U.S. Mission to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the team welcomed more than 6,100 visitors daily to the pavilion using the platform to advance economic growth, promote mutual understanding, and demonstrate the power of democracy to inspire innovation,

ingenuity, and development. The mission reached global audiences from the Middle East, South Asia, the United States, and Europe. The USA Pavilion was also prominently featured in the Expo School Visits program, which welcomed students from around the world to learn about U.S. history and space innovation.

The USA Pavilion's 75 youth ambassadors—hailing from 37 states and U.S. territories—served as greeters and exhibit guides, and were the "Faces of America" for the USA Pavilion. More than 250 cultural performers represented U.S. talent and diversity through 65 cultural performances, including the Harlem Globetrotters and the Tulane University Marching Band.

For some visitors, the USA Pavilion served as their first encounter with the United States, creating a unique opportunity to learn more about the nation. Visitors at the USA Pavilion journeyed through eight exhibits: Lady Liberty's Torch, a media show of the sun rising on a half-scale replica of the Statue of Liberty's iconic torch exhibited at Philadelphia's Centennial Expo in 1876, the first World's Fair in the United States; President Thomas Jefferson's Quran, the first time this national historic treasure left its home in the Library of Congress; American Innovation, a display highlighting some of America's most iconic innovators and their inventions including Nikolas Tesla, Henry Ford, Alexander Graham Bell, and Steve Jobs; The Innovation Generation, an exhibit featuring personal interviews from modern American inventors highlighting the impact new technologies will have on the world; The Sky is No Longer the Limit, an exhibit featuring an eight-minute immersive media show exploring the future of America's technological innovations, from the democratization of space to quantum computing to sustainable energy; Explore the USA, where guests explored America's National Parks through the grand works of American photographer QT Luong; Lunar Sample, a 3.75-billion-year-old lunar sample brought back to Earth in 1972 by the Apollo 17 mission; and SpaceX Falcon 9 Rocket, which served as the grand finale of the USA Pavilion, an awe-inspiring replica of the partially reusable medium-lift launch vehicle designed and manufactured by SpaceX that towered over the pavilion. In the exhibit Lunar Sample, visitors were able to touch the Moon, which quickly became one of the most popular attractions at the Expo.

Expo 2020 Dubai, one of the largest events of its kind ever to be held in the Middle East, drew an international audience and provided a unique opportunity to strengthen U.S. economic and agricultural ties with regional countries. During Expo's Food, Agriculture, and Livelihoods week, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack led the United States Department of Agriculture Agribusiness Trade Mission and the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate Ministerial at the Expo, promoting the quality, reliability, and safety of U.S. food and agricultural products. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo led the TradeWinds trade mission that connected

more than 100 American companies with Middle Eastern and international partners and addressed economic inclusion issues for women in business.

The USA Pavilion hosted over 200 representatives from more than 50 American companies during the Dubai Air Show to promote the U.S. aerospace industry. Several U.S. states also convened trade delegations at the USA Pavilion to promote agricultural and commercial exports, facilitating U.S. businesses to develop their networks of partners and clients in the UAE. In addition, American corporations, such as GE, Citigroup, and Marriott utilized the USA Pavilion as a meeting point for client events, product launches, and networking opportunities.

The Minnesota Bid Commission also visited Expo 2020 Dubai to advance the U.S. proposal to bring the World's Fair back to America for the first time in 40 years. Minnesota Expo USA 2027, themed "Healthy People, Healthy Planet," would be the first-ever expo focused on health and wellness. The Department of State is working with the state of Minnesota to support the U.S. bid.

U.S. pavilions at World's Fairs improve international perceptions of the United States and create a platform to engage foreign audiences about the country, its history, culture, and vision for the future. The Expo also gives the U.S. mission in the country where it is hosted the ability to strengthen bilateral trade relations and promote investment, travel, and education in the United States.

"U.S. participation at Expo 2020 Dubai is our largest public diplomacy event this year," said former-Senior Official for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Jennifer Hall Godfrey. "World's Fairs are the perfect opportunity to present American culture, values, and our people to the world. It was a true honor to be part of this experience and I'm confident the next USA Pavilion in Osaka 2025 will be just as successful as Dubai." The USA Pavilion experience continues, available to the public, through a virtual interactive tour.

Nadia Ziyadeh is the programming and communications manager for the Expo Unit at the U.S. Consulate in Dubai.

Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, head of the USA National Day Presidential Delegation, speaks during an official ceremony at Expo 2020 Dubai, March 6. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

The Tulane University Marching Band performed at the Al Wasl dome during Thanksgiving celebrations representing U.S. talent and diversity through their performance, Nov. 28, 2021. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

Pavilion guests view the Quran once owned by Thomas Jefferson–one of the pavilion's most popular exhibits. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

One exhibit featured a touchable lunar sample, on loan from NASA, which was collected near the Lunar Module landing site on Apollo 17 by Astronaut Jack Schmitt. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

A visitor experiences the Lunar Sample, one of the most popular and “Instagrammable” artifacts at the USA Pavilion. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

The Mars Opportunity Rover prototype, designed by a team of students from Cornell University, was a popular attraction at the USA Pavilion. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

The Minnesota Bid Delegation visited the USA Pavilion in February 2022. The United States has submitted a bid to host the World’s Fair in 2027 in Minnesota. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

Visitors wave American flags and enjoy USA National Day celebrations at Expo 2020 Dubai, March 6. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

A group of visitors pose for photos near the entrance of the USA Pavilion at the 2020 Dubai Expo. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

Youth ambassadors were the “Faces of America” to the millions of visitors at Expo 2020 Dubai, serving as greeters and exhibit guides. Photo courtesy of the USA Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

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Paradigm Shift: Promoting women's empowerment through the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs

Vice Governor Talia Cabrera (front row, fifth from left) shouts "Hui puhahi" with women from the Shuar community in Ecuador during the province's first Academy for Women Entrepreneurs program launch, February 2020. Photo courtesy of Quito Chamber of Commerce

By Amelia Shaw

Spanish entrepreneur Diana Ballart was studying innovation as a graduate student in 2017 when she came up with the design for a medical device to take saliva samples from a toddler. Her invention, The Smart Lollipop, was a novel non-invasive way to help detect diseases in children. In 2018, she launched her biomedical business and the next year was selected to join 30 women as part of the Department of State's third cohort of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) in Spain.

During AWE-Spain's three-month business training, Ballart learned to better strategize financing for her business. AWE's focus on strategic planning and business pitching helped her to win multiple competitions for young startups across Europe. She says her experience with AWE's community of women entrepreneurs helped her in her quest to create 'a paradigm shift' in pediatric medical testing.

"Participating in AWE gave us the opportunity to learn about new tools," Ballart said, "and to gain visibility, share experiences with women leaders who have already been through similar processes, and to be part of a community of entrepreneurs that actually want to help each other"—which for Ballart has been the greatest value of the AWE experience.

AWE launched in 2019 under the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to empower women with the knowledge, network, and access they need to launch and scale their businesses. The program uses the online learning platform

DreamBuilder, designed by Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University in partnership with the Freeport-McMoRan Foundation, and classroom learning with local mentors to teach business basics like marketing, finance, and accounting. AWE reinforces peer-to-peer learning and strengthens cohesion among the graduating class of women entrepreneurs, who become U.S. exchange alumni upon completion of the program.

AWE currently works in more than 80 countries, and has helped 16,000 women worldwide grow their businesses, promoting prosperity and women's empowerment at a local level—even in some of the world's most remote locations. Deep in the Ecuadorian Amazon, Vice Governor Talia Cabrera was presiding over the launch of her province's first AWE cohort in February 2020, which she believes may help change some traditional beliefs that hold women back. She stood shoulder-to-shoulder with more than 100 women in the remote province of Morona Santiago. Their hands were raised in solidarity as they shouted "*Hui puhahi,*" which in the local indigenous Shuar language means "here we stand."

"This is a program that can break paradigms," Cabrera said, explaining that some cultural traditions among indigenous communities—like getting married at 13 years of age—have kept girls from completing school, limiting their options later in life. "With AWE, women in this community have a new chance," said Cabrera. "They can learn basic skills to launch a small business, provide for their families, and contribute to the local economy."

After learning how AWE trained indigenous women in a neighboring province, Cabrera devoted public sector funding to support the academy. Within a year, many more provincial governments followed suit, and Embassy Quito raised nearly $200,000 to support its local AWE program. Cabrera is using the program to promote economic development in Morona Santiago, while raising health and education outcomes for women and children in her remote province. "This initiative is so important for our province, for its economic development and to improve the quality of life," said Cabrera.

By promoting women's economic opportunities and ensuring women have the skills, capabilities, and resources needed to participate and excel in the economy, the AWE program directly supports the president's National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality. At U.S. missions worldwide, AWE is a highly cost-effective program that supports common U.S. foreign policy goals such as promoting prosperity, strengthening civil society, and empowering women. And it appears to be gaining ground.

Research has shown that AWE generates income and creates jobs in women-led businesses around the world. According to a 2021 survey of 1,000 AWE alumni in 26 countries, 74% of women who complete the program earn more money in their

business, and nearly one third hire more people. On top of this, more than 90% of AWE alumni reported increased confidence and higher self-esteem, citing improvements in specific skill sets like strategic planning and public speaking skills after the training.

Generating income and creating jobs are clear metrics for economic growth. Few people understand this better than Taiwanese AWE alumna Mina Wu, co-founder of the customized clothing business Legere. The AWE program helped her to streamline her business, better expand customer needs, and deepen customer relationships in a tight knit world of high-end consumers—which helped her to grow her business and raise her ambitions.

“We have powerful networks of salaried customers, and we are driven by strong customer needs,” said Wu. “The market size is really large, around $108 billion dollars. We would like to get 1% of it, which is $1 billion dollars.”

Taiwan’s AWE program is also working with Meta (previously Facebook) to coach AWE alumni in Taiwan on business pitching and digital marketing strategies. The collaboration includes a pitch competition featured as part of Meta’s #SheMeansBusiness campaign, where the winner receives advertising credits and a professional marketing video produced by Meta for distribution on its massive social media platforms. The collaboration is also a great example of how U.S. tech companies can leverage America’s private-sector expertise and corporate social responsibility to advance AWE women’s business acumen to help them better penetrate U.S. and international markets.

AWE is also helping women entrepreneurs in Africa become more tech savvy and take advantage of a rapidly expanding digital environment in ways that benefit their businesses, and the community at large.

Rwandan medical student and entrepreneur Umunyana Marie Chantal is leveraging her AWE experience to launch an online tele-health portal for expectant mothers. “As a young girl, I noticed that my mother was sickly whenever she was expectant with my siblings,” said Umunyana. “I longed for someone to hold her hand and walk her through the nine-month journey…I did not know then how this experience would later shape my outlook on maternal health, but it is the major reason I dreamed [of] becoming a doctor.”

AWE helped Chantal to design her business plan, and her digital platform Umubyeyi Elevate is helping women get access to much needed information on maternal and child health at the touch of their phones.

Tanzanian Catherine Shembilu credits AWE with teaching her new skills like digital marketing, product pricing, and calculating direct and indirect costs—skills which helped her expand her business internationally and export to 16 countries. Today her community-based basket-weaving business has created jobs for almost 300

women weavers from the community, and she is able to distribute her hand-made baskets in the United States through online marketplaces like The Little Market. All around the world, from megacities to remote regions of the jungle, AWE is investing in women in ways that shift gender paradigms and power up local economies—one community at a time.

Amelia Shaw is a public diplomacy officer serving as team lead for the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Office of Alumni Affairs.

Academy for Women Entrepreneurs alumna Diana Ballart (left) holds her Smart Lollipop during a visit to her stand by Public Affairs Officer Emma Marwood (center) and Barcelona Consul General Katie Stana (right) during the Mobile World Congress in March. Photo by Astrid Aran

Vice Governor Talia Cabrera (left) stands with a Shuar indigenous woman and Public Diplomacy Officer Amelia Shaw (right) who worked at Embassy Quito during the launch of the first Academy of Women Entrepreneurs cohort in Morona Santiago, Ecuador, February 2020. Photo courtesy of Quito Chamber of Commerce

Academy of Women Entrepreneurs alumna Mina Wu co-founded the Taiwanese customized clothing company Legere. Photo courtesy of Mina Wu

Academy for Women Entrepreneurs alumna Umunyana Marie Chantal (bottom row, left) poses with her digital development team for Umbyeyi Elevate. Chantal is a final year medical student creating a telehealth portal for expectant moms in Rwanda. Photo courtesy of Umunyana Marie Chantal

Academy for Women Entrepreneurs alumna Catherine Shembilu (center) models her fine hand-woven baskets with weavers from her factory in Tanzania. Photo courtesy of Catherine Shembilu

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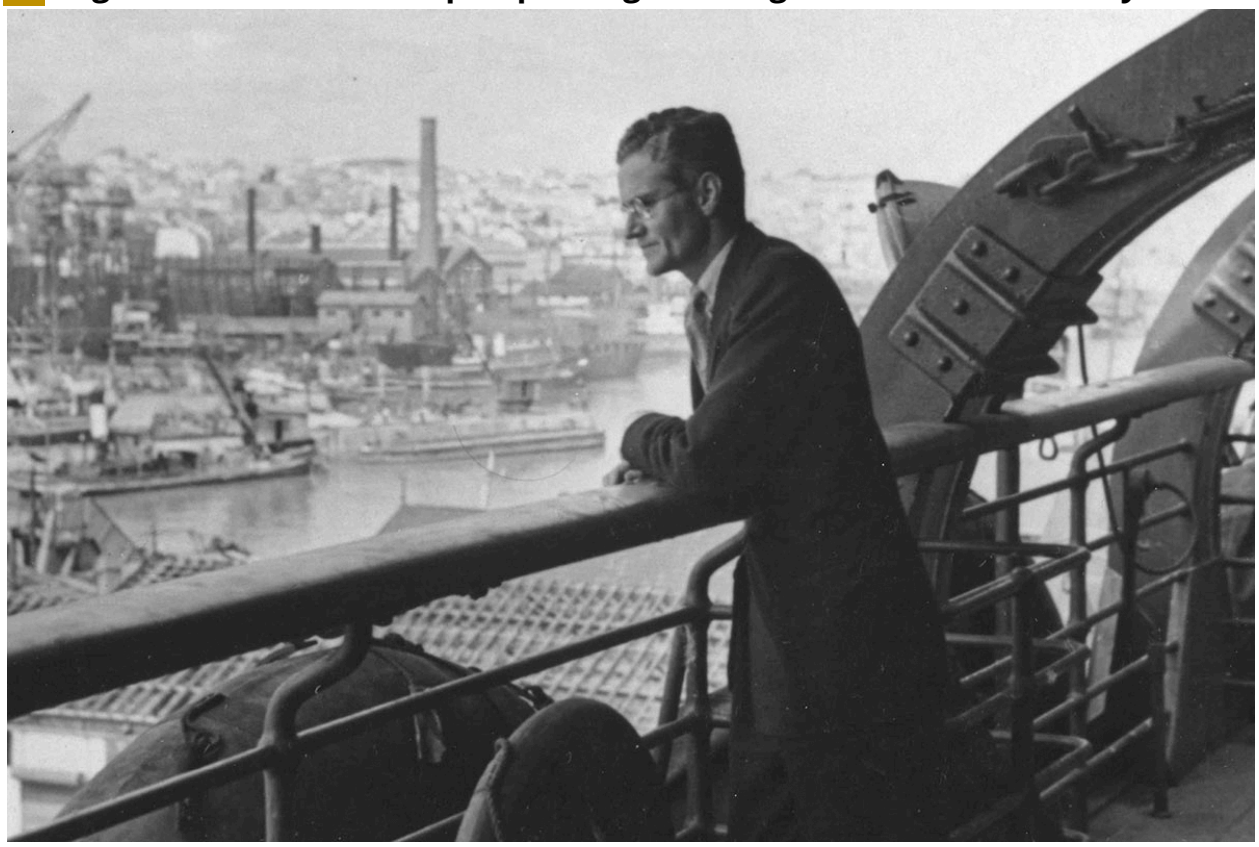
Pages of Time: Marseille passport log sheds light on consular history



Vice Consul Hiram Bingham in Marseille. He and his colleague Myles Standish issued visas to refugees at the U.S. Consulate in Marseille, saving hundreds of lives in the process. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

By Lindsay Henderson

When the U.S. Consulate General in Marseille cleaned out its basement file room in the summer of 2014, an unusual item came to light. Too large to fit in a shredder, a massive old ledger book was set aside. One of the consulate's locally employed staff flipped through it, noting the many names of famous Americans listed on its pages. Recognizing it for what it was—the consulate's register of passport services for U.S. citizens from the early days of World War II—a record of a community during wartime and a document of brave Americans from all walks of life who took great risks to save the lives of others, she put it in a drawer for safekeeping.

The port city of Marseille on France's southern coast has been a crossroads for migration since ancient times. During the 1930s, it hosted thousands of refugees from the Spanish Civil War, and, as the Nazis rose to power in Germany, the city also hosted German Jews, dissidents, artists, and others who fled the Nazi regime. When Germany invaded France in June 1940, additional refugees flocked to Marseille from Paris and other parts of Nazi-occupied northern France. Many of these refugees—often stateless—were forced into camps located throughout the

region, where conditions were often grim, and the threat of being sent to Nazi-occupied territory was constant.

One way to be released from the camps in Vichy France in 1940-1941 was to obtain a visa to immigrate to another country, including the United States. The greatest obstacle to obtaining a U.S. visa, however, was the Department of State's policy toward visas for these refugees at the time. The Department instructed consular officers working at embassies and consulates overseas to delay visa issuance as long as possible, which frustrated refugees' attempts to reach places safer than Vichy France.

Among these refugees were a number of famous individuals—authors, playwrights, artists, opposition politicians, and others who had run afoul of the Nazi regime and ended up in France. Among them were artists Marc Chagall and Max Ernst, and authors Lion Feuchtwanger and Hannah Arendt. Concerned for their welfare, a private American group called the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC) developed a list of anti-Nazi refugees who were in grave danger of being turned over to the Nazis. Reaching out to Eleanor Roosevelt for assistance, they managed to convince Congress to allocate a limited number of non-quota immigrant visas for these individuals.

The ERC hired American journalist Varian Fry to go to Marseille, locate the people on the list, and to try to get them out of France. Using both legal and illegal techniques—including helping people legitimately obtain visas and exit permits, but also facilitating the smuggling of some travelers across the border into Spain—Fry helped more than 2,000 people emigrate to the United States. While Fry was aiding well-known dissidents, other refugee organizations, including those run by the Quakers, Unitarians, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the Red Cross, were also in Marseille helping ordinary people who were refugees in the region to escape.

Eventually, Fry was forced to leave France by the Vichy regime. However, before he left France, his passport was validated for his travel by ConGen Marseille, which he visited on July 11, 1941. His visit was recorded in the consulate's passport log.

In their efforts, Fry and other rescue groups were aided by two American consular officers at ConGen Marseille, who quietly defied Department policy and helped as many refugees escape as they were able. Their names were Hiram Bingham—known as Harry—and Myles Standish. Neither Bingham nor Standish seemed to fit the mold of typical career diplomats for the time, but for the hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals they were able to help, their efforts were the difference between life and death.

Harry Bingham was a family man with 11 children, son of U.S. Senator Hiram Bingham, the first American to explore the Inca ruins at Machu Picchu; his mother was an heiress of the Tiffany and Co. fortune. Bingham was educated in private schools, and eventually graduated from Yale. He worked as a clerk at Embassy Tokyo before returning to get his law degree from Harvard. He returned to the Department, serving in Warsaw and London before arriving in France in 1936.
Myles Standish came from a very different background. Raised as an only child of a working-class family in New York City, he joined the Foreign Service as a clerk in 1930, and served in Cuba, before working in Manchester, England, where he was one of the first Foreign Service officers granted permission to marry a foreign citizen while in active service. Newly married to his British wife, he was assigned to Marseille in 1939 to be the chief of the consulate's visa section, accompanied by his wife and their young daughter.
Despite the Department's order to slow visa processing, Standish and Bingham found ways to issue visas and provide travel documents to stateless refugees who no longer had passports. By issuing visas on documents they created themselves—"affidavits in lieu of passport"—they are believed to have issued at least 2,500 visas, saving the lives of people who otherwise would have likely been deported to Nazi death camps.
Issuing visas was not the only support that Bingham and Standish provided to refugees and the organizations trying to get them out of Vichy France. Unbeknownst to their superiors, both consular officers played a far more substantial role in helping Varian Fry and others smuggle people to safety. In the summer of 1940, Standish borrowed Bingham's car and drove to Les Milles, a camp in southern France where Lion Feuchtwanger was imprisoned. Feuchtwanger was a German Jewish author and playwright hated by Hitler for his sharp criticism of the Nazi Party that began years before they came to power. Disguising Feuchtwanger as an old woman, Standish told French officials at checkpoints that the old lady in the back seat was his mother-in-law from the United States. Back in Marseille, the consular officers hid Feuchtwanger at Bingham's house—without the knowledge of their superiors—for several weeks until he was given an alias and a visa and smuggled out of France. Feuchtwanger lived in the United States until his death in 1958.
Both Standish and Bingham were reassigned in the spring of 1941. Bingham was sent briefly to Portugal and then to Argentina, and he resigned from the Foreign Service in 1946. Standish returned to Washington and was assigned to Karachi, but the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 disrupted travel plans, and he was reassigned to Aruba. Standish resigned from the Foreign Service in 1942. Both Standish and Bingham and their family members' names appear among those in

the passport register, along with hundreds of other Americans who were either resident in the Marseille area, fleeing Europe, or arriving on official business. Among those traveling through Marseille on official business was James Roosevelt, the president's son, who visited the consulate on August 4, 1941, probably on his way to Switzerland as part of an extensive trip to signal to allied and neutral countries that the United States would likely join the war. American novelist, poet, and playwright Gertrude Stein and her partner, Alice B. Toklas, appeared at the consulate on June 20, 1941, to validate their passports. Similarly, Marguerite "Peggy" Guggenheim stopped by the consulate for passport services on March 22, 1941, as did her ex-husband, artist Laurence Vail, and their daughter, Pegeen Vail on April 9, 1941.

American citizens who turned out to be Nazi and Soviet spies are also listed in the log. Eccentric American-born millionaire Charles Bedeaux and his wife, Fern, visited the consulate for passport services on August 24, 1941. A Nazi spy, Bedeaux was captured by Allied forces in Algeria in 1943. The U.S. government charged him with treason, and he committed suicide in prison in Miami in 1944. U.S. citizen Noel Field spied for the Soviet Union while working for the Department's Bureau of European Affairs in the 1930s. By 1941, he was the director of the American Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's relief mission in Marseille, which provided relief for Jewish refugees, antifascists, and leftists, helping many escape to Switzerland and elsewhere. He visited ConGen Marseille on June 12, 1941, for passport services and spent much of the war in Switzerland. Field was arrested in Prague in 1949, and handed over to the Hungarian secret police, where he served as a pretext for show trials of communist functionaries. After his release from prison, he stayed in Hungary, where he died in 1970.

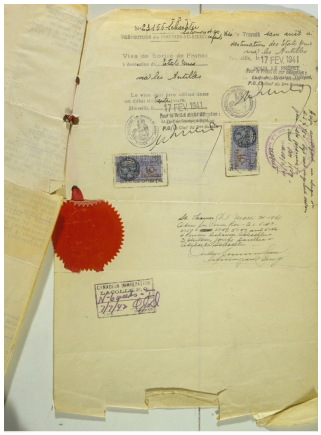
The passport log continues to provide clues to the stories of the U.S. citizens who passed through Marseille in the final months before the United States entered the war. Not all of those who appeared for passport services survived the war. However, it is both a document of an expatriate community in crisis and a testament to the many brave Americans who took great risks to be of service to others in a dark period in history. To make this information accessible to future generations of researchers, the Marseille passport log has been digitized for the collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the original record now survives in the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

The locally employed staff member at ConGen Marseille who salvaged the Marseille passport log from the shredder had a strong personal connection to it. She recognized its historical value because she knew the names of consular officers Bingham and Standish, both listed among its pages—the same consular officers

who issued immigrant visas to her mother, uncles, and grandparents at ConGen Marseille in May 1941, and in doing so, saved their lives.

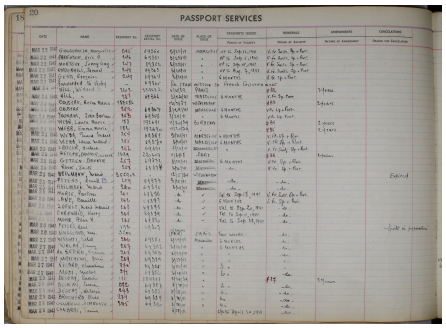
Lindsay Henderson is consul general at Embassy Lima.

From left: Lindsay Henderson, Kelly Landry, and Jodie Tawiah at the “Pirates to Passports” exhibit, where the Marseille Passport Log was displayed, May 2019. Photo courtesy of the Bureau of Consular Affairs

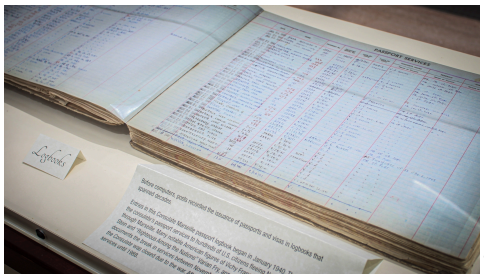


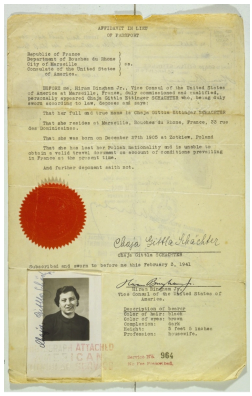
Exit visas for the Salomon Schachter family on an affidavit in lieu of passport issued by Hiram Bingham, February 1941. Many refugees lacked valid passports, so Standish and Hiram Bingham created their own travel documents for the issuance of visas. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

Immigrant visas issued at the U.S. Consulate in Marseille to Salomon Schachter and his family on an affidavit in lieu of passport by Vice Consul Hiram Bingham, 1941. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum



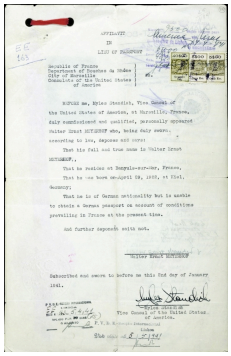
American heiress and art collector Marguerite “Peggy” Guggenheim also visited the U.S. Consulate in Marseille for passport services on her way out of France in 1941. Guggenheim appears as the first entry on page 20. Her then-husband, Laurence Vail, and their daughter, Pegeen Vail, also appear in the Marseille Passport Log. Photo by Lindsay Henderson

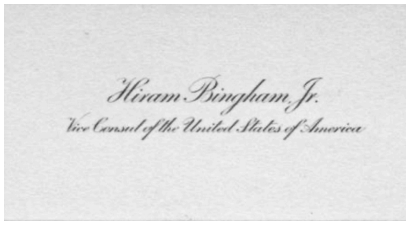

The Marseille Passport Log sits on display at the National Museum of American Diplomacy, May 2019. Photo courtesy of the Bureau of Consular Affairs



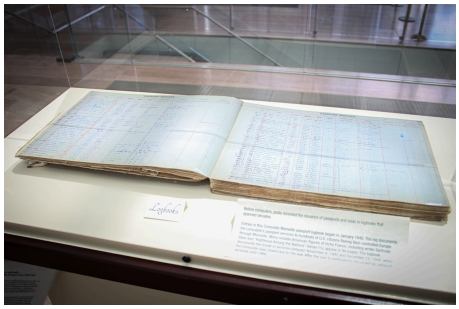
An affidavit in lieu of passport that was issued to refugee Chaja Schachter in Marseille, 1941 by Vice Consul Hiram Bingham. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

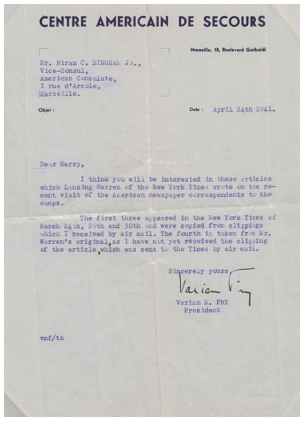
Vice Consul Hiram Bingham’s diplomatic identification card, which expired in December 1939. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum


An affidavit in lieu of passport issued by Vice Consul Myles Standish in Marseille, 1941. Many refugees lacked valid passports, so Standish and Hiram Bingham created their own travel documents for the issuance of visas. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum



Vice Consul Hiram Bingham's calling card. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum


The Marseille Passport Log sits on display at the National Museum of American Diplomacy, May 2019. Photo courtesy of the Bureau of Consular Affairs


CENTRE AMERICAIN DE SECOURS

Marseille, 18, Boulevard Garibaldi

Mr. Hiram C. BINGHAM Jr.,
Vice-Consul,
American Consulate,
1 rue d'Arcole,
Marseille.

Objet : Date : April 24th 1941.

Dear Harry,

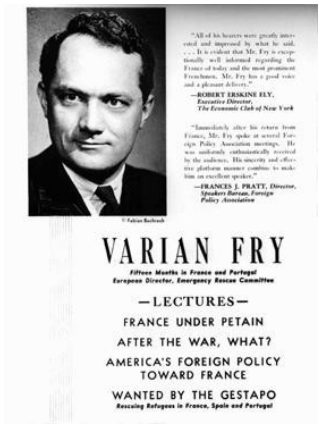
I think you will be interested in these articles which Lansing Warren of the New York Time: wrote on tie recent visit of the American newspaper correspondents to the camps.

The first three appeared in the New York Times of March 24th, 29th and 30th and were copied from clippings which I received by air mail. The fourth is taken from Mr. Warren's original, as I have not yet received the clipping of the article which was sent to the Times by air mail.

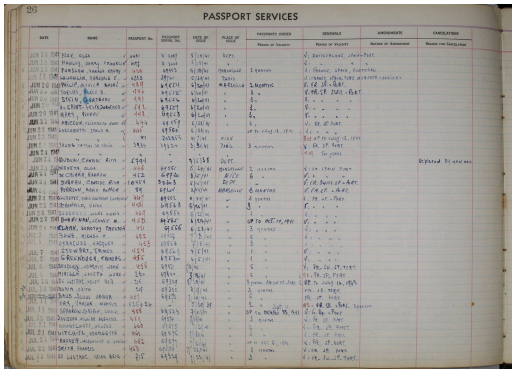
Sincerely yours,
Varian M. FRY
President

vmf/tb

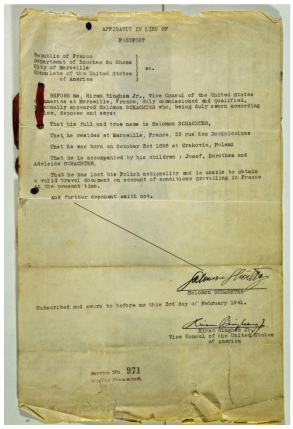
A letter to Vice Consul Hiram Bingham from Varian Fry about Lansing Warren, was a "New York Times" reporter working in Vichy France who was also listed in the Marseille Passport Log. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum



An advertisement for a series of lectures by Varian Fry in New York, 1942. Fry was an American journalist who helped refugees escape from France between 1940 and 1941. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial



Page 26 of the Marseille Passport Log shows American author Gertrude Stein and her partner, Alice B. Toklas, listed near the top of the page; Varian Fry is near the bottom. Photo by Lindsay Henderson



A photo of the affidavit in lieu of passport issued at Marseille by Vice Consul Hiram Bingham, Feb. 1941. Many refugees lacked valid passports, so Standish and Hiram Bingham created their own travel documents for the issuance of visas. Image courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

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Women of Valor: Film highlights need for women's political representation in Israel

From left: Master of ceremonies Allison Kaplan Sommer, International Visitor Leadership Program alumnae and Member of Knesset Sharren Haskel of the New Hope party, and Ruth Wasserman-Lande of the Blue and White party speak with audience members during a panel discussion following the film, March 1. Photo by David Azagury

By Stephanie Baric

"A Woman of Valor" is a biblical poem sung before the Friday night Shabbat meal in ultra-Orthodox households. Considered an ode to feminine strength and qualities, it is also a song of gratitude for hard working women. In recent years, Jewish feminists have been recasting the poem to challenge gender stereotypes. Israeli filmmaker Anna Somershaf chose "Women of Valor" as the title for her documentary film about ultra-Orthdox, or Haredi, women fighting for their right to political voice and representation.

"For me, a woman of valor is a woman who is strong and brave, who fights for her rights and the rights of other women. The Haredi women in the film are women of valor," said Somershaf.

"Women of Valor," which advances gender equality and the empowerment of women through U.S. foreign policy, was made possible by a culmination of multiple, overlapping projects in 2018 supported by the Department of State and Mission Israel. The film itself was supported by a public diplomacy grant. Somershaf is an alumna of the Department's International Visitor's Leadership Program (IVLP), and most of the Haredi activists featured in the film participated in a women's leadership program in Jerusalem made possible by embassy funding.

"This is an example of holistic public diplomacy programming in action. We are promoting a shared society in Israel through equality, inclusion, and the empowerment of all women, across all spheres," said Deputy Cultural Affairs Officer

Alison Brown. “From national and local political representation [and] participation in the economy through entrepreneurship training [to the] development of high-tech skills [and] women engaged in peace-building, we are delighted to see our grantees and program beneficiaries succeed. They are bringing their stories to a wider audience which helps inspire and empower the next generation of brave women.”

The film premiered at the Jerusalem Film Festival in July 2021. Shot over five years, the documentary follows Esty Bitton Shushan, a Haredi women’s rights activist. In 2012, Shushan launched a social media campaign protesting the ban on Haredi women running as candidates for ultra-Orthodox parties under the slogan “no voice, no vote.” In 2015, along with Estee Rieder-Indursky, Shushan co-founded Nivcharot (“elected” or “chosen”), the first and only Haredi feminist organization in Israel.

When asked about the focus on Haredi women’s political voice and representation, Shushan responded, “There are a lot of issues related to women’s rights that need to be addressed, but with no voice and no seat at the table where decisions are being made that directly affects our lives, there will be no change. Using a top-down, bottom-up approach, we are advocating for the participation of women in decision-making whether it is in their neighborhoods or in the Knesset [Israeli Parliament].”

Somershaf began shooting the film in 2017.

“Even though I am not Haredi or religious, the more I learned about the political challenges Haredi women face, the more I felt the need to take action. Their situation affects me as a citizen of this country and the absence of Haredi women from public decision-making affects our society as a whole,” said Somershaf.

In 2018, Somershaf was selected to participate in the Department’s IVLP project called “Changemakers: Leadership Development for Women.” Along with five other Israeli women, she traveled to Washington, Denver, and New York, and spent two weeks examining the U.S. political system and how women participate at local, state, and national levels of politics.

“All of the women in ‘Changemakers’ were engaged in some form of social activism,” said Somershaf. “My biggest takeaway from my time in the U.S. is that cinema is a powerful tool for social change, especially when it is combined with women’s solidarity in advocating for their rights.”

When asked about what changes she experienced as the documentary was being filmed, Shusan said, “A decade ago, when I began my activism, I was one crazy woman no one understood. Two years later, we were five crazy women.”

The film opens with activists putting up posters in MeaShe'arim, an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in Jerusalem. One of the posters criticizes women for asking for political representation, as a way to grab attention and create awareness about the systematic exclusion of Haredi women in politics by ultra-Orthodox parties.
Nivcharot's marketing campaign is reminiscent of the "Guerilla Girls," a group of anonymous women artists and activists who papered New York City's streets, subways, and the facades of art museums with posters calling out racial and gender inequities in the art world.
In addition to community activism, Nivcharot also has also engaged in policy advocacy. Working with Souria Bishara, a lawyer and supervisor of the International Human Rights Clinic in the Faculty of Law at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Nivcharot filed a report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2017 titled, "Israel's Responsibility for Eliminating the Discrimination against Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Women in the Right to Equal Participation in Public and Political Life in Israel." The Committee on CEDAW called on the government of Israel to take action to resolve the issue of Haredi women's rights to political participation. After petitioning Israel's Supreme Court in 2015, demanding that Agudat Yisrael, the leading Haredi party in the Knesset, accept women into its ranks, three years later the court issued a ruling stating that the party must remove or amend its bylaws.
Nivcharot has also provided leadership training in partnership with the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), which promotes women's empowerment in Israel, through funding from the U.S. embassy. The leadership program, titled "A New Social Order," was designed to open doors for women to positions of power, decision-making, and influence. During the first round of training, Nivcharot received applications from 100 women, and 30 were accepted into the program. As part of their training, the women visited the Knesset.
A powerful moment in the film is when the women stand together as a group and stare down in silence at the plenum hall where members of the Knesset and the government sit. The group decides to confront Haredi members of the Knesset.
"I spoke to many ultra-Orthodox men who off-camera expressed support for their cause," said Somershaf, "but they are afraid to say anything. They, too, are victims of the patriarchal system."
To date, four cohorts have graduated from the women's leadership training program, with a fifth cohort currently enrolled.
Of the 30 women who graduated from the leadership program, 22 registered to become members of Israel's two ultra-Orthodox parties, Shas and YahadutHaTorah (United Torah Judaism). The women informed the parties that if they were not allowed to become members, they were prepared to take the parties to court. One

woman ran for local government and another ran for the Knesset. Racheli Morgenstern campaigned for a position on the city council in Petah Tikvah, a suburb of Tel Aviv.

When asked in a television interview why she did not win, Morgenstern said, “The public isn’t ready yet.”

Hila Hassan Lefkowitz, who ran for the Knesset, ran as a candidate of the inclusive Haredi party called Am Shalem in the Knesset elections in 2021. Although the party was not elected to the Knesset, it was a historic moment for Haredi women in politics.

“Starting in 2017, I advocated that we support the film and the leadership training because I could see the potential for social change,” said Ellen Schnitser, a public diplomacy specialist based in Embassy Jerusalem’s Branch Office in Tel Aviv. “What we achieved over the last five years has exceeded my expectations. Not only are more Haredi women activists joining the movement, they are claiming their right to a seat at the table. This inspires me to redouble our efforts because it shows that transformative change is possible.”

In honor of Women’s History Month, the embassy organized a screening of “Women of Valor” in Tel Aviv, March 1, hosted by Deputy Chief of Mission Jonathan Shrier and his wife Stephanie Baric, president of diplomatic spouses and partners of Israel. During a panel discussion, two IVLP alumnae now serving as members of the Knesset, Ruth Wasserman-Lande and Sharren Haskel, shared their experiences in shattering the glass ceiling for women in politics. The audience of 120 women’s rights activists, students, and diplomats were able to identify with the women of Nivcharot and articulate the universal message of the film.

“Men in my community are using the same arguments to perpetuate patriarchy and prevent us from realizing our rights,” said Samah Salaime, a Palestinian citizen of Israel and feminist activist. “It is time to work together for gender equality.”

With the U.S. premiere of “Women of Valor” at the Atlanta Jewish film festival in February 2022, Somershaf and Shushan are working on a global campaign involving educational screenings that will mobilize further support for Haredi women’s political rights in Israel. In March 2022, they celebrated International Women’s Day with a Facebook poster featuring dozens of Haredi women, including their photos and names, posing as the American icon Rosie the Riveter under the slogan ‘Yes, we can. The elected or chosen one.’

Stephanie Baric is an employee family member and the president of the Diplomatic Spouses and Partners of Israel.

Stephanie Baric, a United Nations expert on women's empowerment, shares her professional experience with the audience at Embassy Jerusalem's Women's History Month program, a documentary screening of the film "Women of Valor" in Tel Aviv, March 1. Photo by Boris Belenkin

Israeli and foreign diplomatic corps attend Mission Israel's Women's History Month program featuring a screening of the documentary, "Women of Valor" in Tel Aviv Cinematheque, March 1. Photo by David Azagury

From left: Public Diplomacy Specialist Ellen Schnitser, Members of Knesset Ruth Wasserman-Lande, Members of Knesset Sharren Haskel, Deputy Chief of Mission Jonathan Shrier, and master of ceremonies Allison Kaplan Sommer at the embassy's Women's History Month program in Tel Aviv, March 1. Photo by David Azagury

"We Can Do It! With G-d's Help," a Rosie the Riveter-style collage, was designed by artist Tzipi Blumental and features the Nivcharot Haredi Women Movement. Illustration by Tzipi Blumental

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Medan: Expeditionary diplomacy in a tropical environment

An aerial view of the North Sumatran countryside west of Madan shows fertile terraced farmlands amid a lush tropical setting. Photo by Pavel Kirillov

By Jessica Chesbro

In ancient Sanskrit texts, Sumatra island was known as Suwarnadwīpa, the Island of Gold. Tenth-century Arab explorers wrote about the kingdom of Lambri, on the northern end of the island. Marco Polo, in his writings, referred to it as Samara. Historical records from the Song Dynasty talk about a king known only as Haji Sumatrabhumi, or "King of the land of Sumatra," sending envoys to China's Imperial Court. The sixth-largest island in the world, Sumatra is both culturally and ecologically rich. Sumatra's rainforests are home to elephants, orangutans, tigers, and other rare animals.

Medan, Sumatra's largest city, was founded July 1, 1590, by Guru Patimpus. While studying Islam with a local scholar, Patimpus fell in love with the princess of Pulo Brayan. Patimpus married the princess, and they and their sons founded a small village that they named Medan.

Medan later became the capital of the Sultanate of Deli. The Sultanate of Deli was a kingdom founded in 1630, as a tributary kingdom of the larger Sultanate of Aceh. The kingdom's original capital, Deli Tua, is now a suburb of Medan. While the sultanate lost political power under Dutch colonialism, the royal line remains an important cultural symbol. The current Sultan of Deli, Mahmud Lamanjiji Perkasa Alamm, became the youngest person to hold the title when he was crowned in 2005 at only eight years old. Under Dutch colonial rule, tobacco planters moved into Sumatra, causing the city of Medan to expand rapidly. The Deli Company, which began a tobacco enterprise near the Deli River, made use of Medan's port and set up tobacco warehouses, contributing to the population increase. Parts of Medan still bear names such as Polonia and Helvetia, after the Polish and Swiss planters who used to own the land.

Near the end of World War II, Indonesian leader Sukarno, who would go on to become Indonesia's first president, formally declared independence. As the Allied forces planned to return Indonesia to Dutch control, this led to the Battle of Medan, one of the first battles of the Indonesian National Revolution. Dutch and British forces fought against the Indonesian Army for control of Medan.

Today, Medan is the capital of the province of North Sumatra, and a major hub of trade and industry. Strategically positioned close to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, with short direct flights from Kualanamu International Airport, Medan is both a transit point to many popular tourist destinations and a gateway for regional and international trade. The U.S. Consulate in Medan's district includes the Batam Free Trade Zone, where U.S. companies such as Caterpillar, McDermott Steel, and Apple Academy employ more than 10,000 Indonesians. The district also includes the Strait of Malacca, one of the most important shipping lanes in the world. As the main route of transportation between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the Strait of Malacca are economically and strategically important to countries around the world.

Medan's diplomatic community reflects its strategic importance, with diplomats from China, Japan, India, Singapore, and Malaysia, all located in Medan. Medan's international community also includes a United Nations office and a number of third-country nationals. Medan's expat community is small, but close-knit, with an active social calendar. Families tend to connect through the Medan Independent School, which parents described as welcoming. The U.S.-accredited school offers English-language education to students from kindergarten through high school in an International Baccalaureate program. The school educates a mix of expat and Indonesian students, creating close connections and offering children significant multicultural learning experiences. Extracurriculars are also inexpensive and readily available, with children learning activities such as swimming, soccer, music, and dance.

Medan is a port city noted for the quality of its food, with well-stocked international supermarkets and a wide range of restaurants and take-out options. Locals recommend trying the cuisine of Aceh. Medan's Indian community ensures plentiful vegetarian options, both at the restaurants in Little India, and the many local restaurants that use tempeh, mushrooms, and seitan to create vegetarian versions of popular Indonesian dishes. Medan is also noted for its durian, a distinctively pungent fruit that can be eaten plain or incorporated into custards, crepes, and a wide variety of creative dishes. One local restaurant specializes entirely in durian and durian-themed foods.

Medan is noted for its multiculturalism. Medan is near the lands of the Batak people of Sumatra, and many establishments sell the hand-woven Batak ulos cloth,

both for use in traditional clothing and in modern updated styles. The city also has significant Chinese and Indian communities, with influences visible in the city's architecture and houses of worship.

Medan has a proud tradition of religious pluralism, with many Medanese people having people of different faiths in their family. Consequently, Medan's multiculturalism is especially clear during the holidays. There are public decorations and events for a wide range of holidays, including Christmas, Eid, and the Lunar New Year. Everyone celebrates together, and it is common for locals and expats to be invited to a wide range of celebratory events.

"Medan's diversity, reflected in its dynamic local staff, is part of its unique charm," said U.S. Consulate Medan's Principal Officer Gordon Church.

Sumatra's tremendous natural beauty also contributes to Medan being a positive environment for families and outdoorsy people. Lake Toba, surrounded by tropical pine forests, sits in the caldera of an ancient supervolcano, the surface of the waters nearly three thousand feet above sea level. Family member Marta Casbeer explained that a trip to Lake Toba is "like going to paradise." She recommends it for weekend excursions with the family. Another destination popular with families and backpackers alike is Bukit Lawang, home of Medan's orangutans. For conservation reasons visitors are expected to keep a safe distance, however patient visitors can observe these gentle creatures in their natural habitat. Bukit Lawang offers both shorter day hikes and two-day jungle treks that involve an overnight in the jungle. It also has an elephant sanctuary that protects Sumatra's native forest elephants. Additionally, jungle guides can lead you to specimens of the world's largest flower, Rafflesia arnoldii, known as the "corpse flower" due to its unfortunate smell.

"Sumatra's diving opportunities are amazing," said Deputy Principal Officer Jessica Chesbro.

The island of Pulau We, in the province of Aceh, has vibrant coral reefs teeming with colorful creatures such as blue-spotted stingrays and mantis shrimp. Fortunate divers can sometimes encounter larger marine life, including enormous gentle mola mola fish and reportedly the occasional passing whale. And for wreck diving enthusiasts, WWII-era wrecks off the coast provide impressive opportunities.

The U.S. has had a consulate in Medan since Indonesia's independence in 1949. Consulate Medan covers the 10 provinces of the island of Sumatra, which has a population of fifty-five million people. With a consular district that borders the South China Sea, this post addresses key diplomatic, economic, and security interests. Indonesia's South China Sea issues with Beijing play out in Sumatra's waters. The consulate's public affairs team works with up-and-coming leaders to promote messaging on a range of issues, including countering violent extremism, maritime security, human rights, and environmental protection. Alumni of

exchange programs including the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative and the International Visitors Leadership Program, work to build community capacity and develop creative collaboration.

“The nexus of policy issues attracted me,” said inbound Political/Economic Officer Suraj Mungara.

With so much important work to be done in Sumatra, Consulate Medan is expanding by adding additional foreign service officer positions. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations is constructing a new consulate compound, which is expected to be completed in 2024. Post is expanding its housing pool by adding furnished apartments with recreation facilities in addition to free-standing homes. Shopping in Indonesia is simple, with an increase in app-based online options for delivery directly to homes. Popular apps such as Grab and Gojek offer not only food and grocery delivery, but transportation, delivery services, movie tickets, and more. Medan also offers an impressive selection of restaurants, shopping centers, movie theaters, and other recreational activities. While speaking some Indonesian is helpful, Medanese will go out of their way to resolve communication challenges and offer inclusive and positive experiences.

U.S. officers serving at Consulate Medan have been known to enjoy serving at the post for its expeditionary diplomacy on key policy issues in a tropical environment. In fact, many U.S. officers serve repeat tours in the country. At the end of an officer’s tour rather than saying goodbye, Mission Indonesia’s locally employed staff reach out to say, Sampai nanti (Until next time).

Jessica Chesbro is the deputy principal officer at the U.S. Consulate in Medan.

Medan’s locally employed staff gather at the principal officer’s residence for a celebration, January 2018. The closeness and mutual support shown by the staff helped them get through challenging times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo by Caroline Tanjyaya

The principal officer's residence was the location of the Art Wall public outreach program where local artists created works of art on issues such as environmental protection and public health. Photo by Caroline Tanjyaya

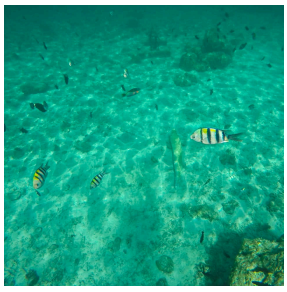
Maha Vihara Maitreya, is a Buddhist temple located in Medan. It is one of the largest buddhist temples in Indonesia. Photo by Leonardo Liang

Maimoon Palace or Maimun Palace is an istana (royal palace) of the Sultanate of Deli and a well-known landmark in Medan. Today, it serves as a museum. Photo by Milosk50

The Medan Post and Telegraph Office is one of many historic buildings in downtown Medan. The post office remains in operation and includes a stamp collection exhibit. Photo by Sony Herdiana

Grand Mosque of Medan or Masjid Raya Al-Mashun is a mosque located in Medan. The mosque was built in 1906 and completed in 1909. In its early years the mosque was a part of the Maimun palace complex. Its architectural style combines Middle Eastern, Indian, and Spanish elements. Photo by Nizar Kauzar

Batak architecture, shown here, refers to the architectural traditions and designs of the various Batak peoples of North Sumatra, Indonesia. Photo by Fabio Lamanna


The crystal-clear waters of Sumatra, such as those seen on Iboh Beach, offer ample opportunities for swimming, snorkeling, and diving. Photo by Marta Casbeer

Lake Toba is a large natural lake in North Sumatra, Indonesia, occupying the caldera of a supervolcano. It is the largest lake in Indonesia and the largest volcanic lake in the world. Toba Caldera is one of 20 Geoparks in Indonesia, and is recognized as a UNESCO Global Geopark. Photo by Kataleewan Intarachote

The Rafflesia Arnoldii, also known as the Corpse Flower, is a significant ecotourism attraction. The flower, which only blooms for one or two days a year, can be found with the support of trained jungle guides. Photo by Rachma Jaurinata

A vendor at a local bazaar in Medan shows off her selection of fresh fruit. Photo by Kataleewan Intarachote

Soto Medan is a creamy coconut milk soup with fried chicken, glass noodles, bean sprouts, egg, and potato cake from Medan, North Sumatra. Photo by Ariyani Tedjo

Map produced by the Office of the Geographer and Global Issues

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International Gender Champion meeting hosted in Geneva

Ambassador Sheba Crocker, U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva, hosted the Geneva Hub's International Gender Champions (IGC) Annual Meeting, March 7. More than 80 gender champions from Geneva missions, civil society, and international organizations attended the event underscoring the collective commitment to breaking down gender barriers and countering gender-based violence. The IGC network has more than 300 active champions and 280 alumni across six hubs in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Paris, The Hague, and Nairobi. Crocker became the 120th International Gender Champion in the Geneva Hub on Feb. 16.

Photo by Eric Bridiers

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Special Advisor on International Disability Rights warmly welcomed in Lebanon

In March, Special Advisor on International Disability Rights Sara Minkara traveled to Lebanon as part of her first official visit abroad to meet government officials and representatives of civil society and to promote the rights of persons with disabilities ahead of Parliamentary elections scheduled for May. Throughout her engagements, she underscored how inclusion brings value to societies as a whole and emphasized the importance of shifting from a charity-based model to one that recognizes the value and rights of persons with disabilities. As an internationally recognized champion for disability inclusion and first-generation Lebanese American from Tripoli, Minkara has retained her close ties in Lebanon and the region, a fact reflected in the warm and enthusiastic welcome extended to her in both official and informal contexts. Members of the disability rights community gathered at the ambassador's residence to welcome Minkara, March 16. **Back row, from left**: Protocol Assistant Jessy Abou Eid; U.N. Goodwill Ambassador for Climate Change Michael Haddad; Rachel Saliba from the Education Development Center in Lebanon; Wassim El Hage from Agonist Coffee Shop; Haya El Rawi from the International Committee for the Red Cross; Minkara; Joseph Helou from the Lebanese American University; Kawthar Taleb from the Social Welfare Institute; Ambassador Dorothy Shea; Special Assistant Hanah Nasri; Cultural Affairs Officer Hermila Yifter. **Front row, from left**: Poet and journalist Rula Helo; para-athlete Ahmad Al Ghoul; Amal Charif from the HalTek Foundation; Fadi El Halabi from the

Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network; and Toufic Alloush from the Tripoli Disability in Sports Association.

Photo by Hermila Yifter

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Mission Fiji celebrates 60th anniversary of Peace Corps

Chargé d'Affaires Tony Greubel (center) was joined by Fijian Permanent Secretary Yogesh Karan (left) and Peace Corps Country Director Kury Cobham (right) to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps, Feb. 23. The event served to officially recognize the more than 2,500 Americans who have served in the Peace Corps in Fiji since 1968. The passion and commitment of these volunteers has contributed notably to Fiji's development and significantly deepened mutual trust and understanding between Fiji and the United States.

Photo courtesy of Embassy Suva

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Embassy partners with Special Olympics to bolster solidarity in Burkina Faso

Embassy Ouagadougou recently partnered with Burkina Faso's Special Olympics Committee on an eighteen-month campaign to promote inclusion of individuals with disabilities through sports. The campaign will introduce Burkinabé journalists and other media influencers to Special Olympics athletes to highlight their stories through media reporting and increased coverage on athletes with disabilities. "All this began with a will to do more, and a desire to not be counted out," said Burkina Faso's Special Olympics President Annick Pikbougoum during a session with journalists, March 19. The Special Olympics campaign will feature athletes from every region in the country and will also serve to use sports as a unifying theme in a country confronting the threat from violent extremism. This combined effort strives to inspire people in a time of hardship by highlighting their stories.

Photo courtesy of the Special Olympic Committee of Burkina Faso

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Blinken hosts town hall with Embassy Kyiv's team in Poland

Secretary of State Antony Blinken hosted a town hall with members of the Embassy Kyiv team working in Poland, while visiting the country, March 5. During the town hall, Blinken acknowledged the challenges the community faced in relocating to Poland and commended the Mission on its excellent work advancing democracy, economic prosperity, and security priorities in Ukraine and throughout the region.

Photo by Ronny Przysucha

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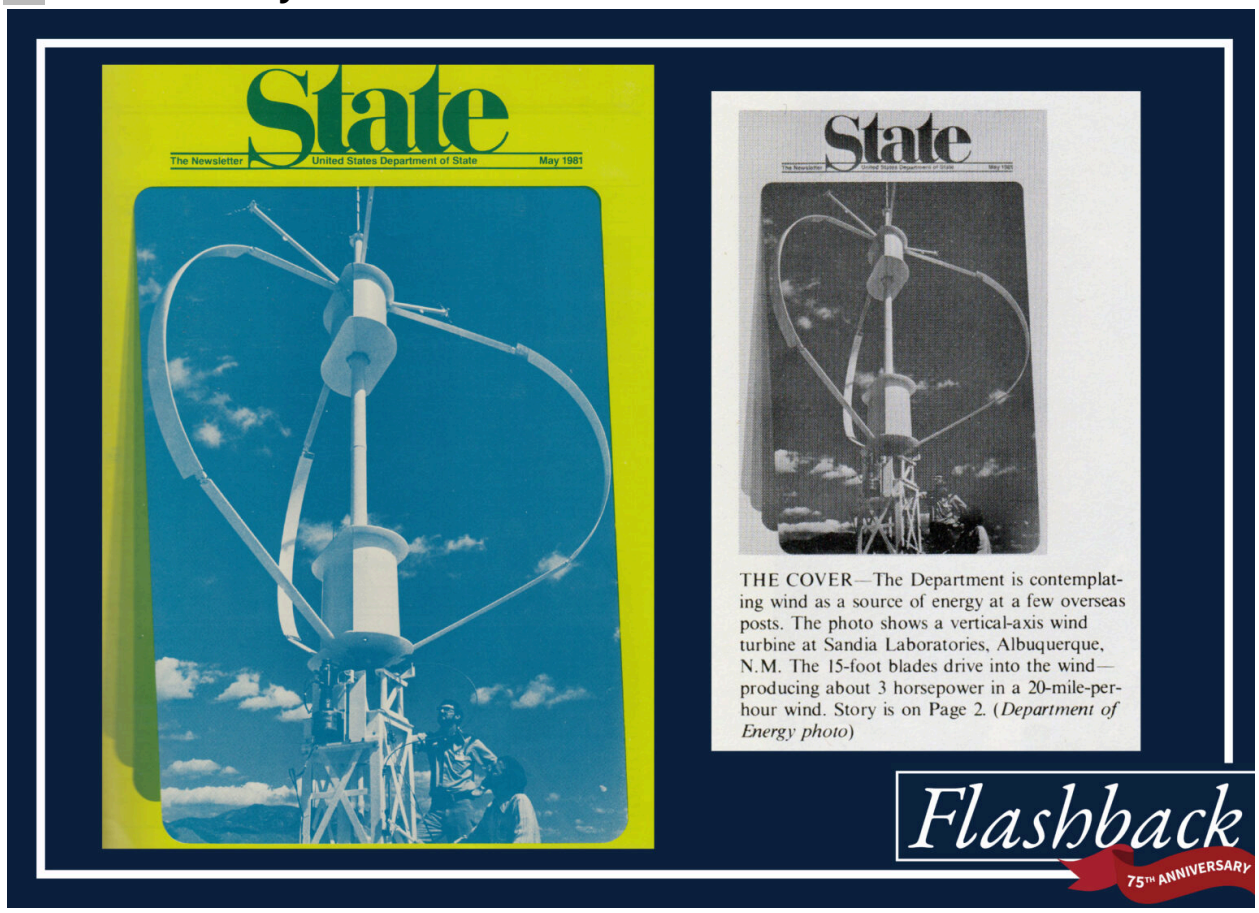
Flashback: May 1981



The cover of State Magazine's May 1981 issue highlighted the Department of State's growing interest in using renewable energy at posts abroad. The photo, taken at Sandia Laboratories in Albuquerque, N.M, showed an early vertical-axis turbine with 15-foot blades that could produce 3 horsepower in 20-mile-per-hour winds. Four decades later the Department has become a government leader in green infrastructure and renewable energy implementation as leaders seek ways to neutralize and reverse the deleterious effects of greenhouse gas emissions, which have driven climate change to a tipping point in recent years.

State Magazine Archive

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Jordan Hall

[video]
“It’s very impactful work that we do. I’m honored to be a part of such an amazing agency
and I’m looking forward to what the future holds.”

Jordan Hall is a Civil Service management and program analyst in the Bureau of Global Talent Management’s Office of Civil Service Talent Management.

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Retirements

Civil Service
Ahmed, Fozia
Allen, Karen J.
Baxter, Lisa R.
Bothwell, Mary L.
Bruchnak, Kirk A.
Callahan, Catherine A.
Cusick, Anne K.
Devlin-Foltz, Elizabeth A.
Dolliff, Phillip R.
Gant, Mary A.
Grimes-Barton, Veda H.
Hebert, Marcus
Hendrickx, Karen E.
Ingram, William S.
Johnson, Deborah A.
Mencl, Roger A.
Mounts, Jeffrey C.
Muftugil, Selen
Nagy, Debora J.
Price, Debra F.
Rowen, Diana L.
Smith-Gibson, Karen L.
Smith, Reginald T.
Suh, Jung W.
Sullivan-Mays, Lisa J.
Taylor, Sarah E.
Washington, Judy T.
Whitney, Jeffrey N.
Wojtas, Christopher T.

Foreign Service
Bergemann, John C.
Bolding, John W.
Bottse, Paul R.
Brown, Bart L.
Candadai, Ravi S.
Carpenter-Rock, Jane H.
Cohen, Jonathan R.
Dokken, Vansin C.
Gannon, William B.
Meyer, Robin D.
Nicholas, David K.
Williams, Donnovan F.

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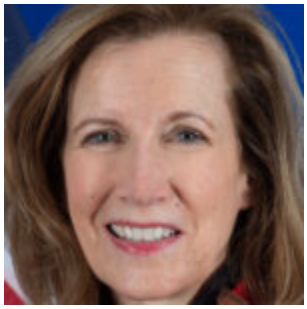
Appointments

Lisa A. Carty | U.S. Representative on the Economic and Social Council of the U.N. and U.S. Alternate Representative to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the U.N.



Lisa A. Carty, of Maryland, was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Representative on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, Feb.10. In addition, she was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Alternate Representative to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, March 30. Previously, she served as director for Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Carty has been a leader in both the public and non-profit sectors including 25 years as a diplomat with overseas assignments in Asia, the Middle East, and Russia. Her U.N. career has included work with the U.N. Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, as well as positions with the Joint U.N. Program on AIDS. Earlier in her career, Carty helped lead the work of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Health Program, and was a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. She has a B.A. from Georgetown University, and an M.P.H. from Johns Hopkins University. She speaks French.

Laura Farnsworth Dogu | U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Honduras

Laura Farnsworth Dogu (SFS), of Texas, was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Honduras, March 11. Previously, she served as a foreign policy advisor to the chief of staff of the U.S. Army. Prior to that, she served at the Federal Bureau of Investigations as the deputy director of the hostage recovery fusion cell, an interagency group of law

enforcement, diplomatic, military and the intelligence experts responsible for the recovery of U.S. persons held hostage abroad. Dogu was the ambassador of the United States to Nicaragua from 2015-2018, and she served as deputy chief of mission at Embassy Mexico City. Other overseas assignments included the U.S. Consulate General in Ciudad Juarez, and the U.S. embassies in Turkey, Egypt, and El Salvador. Washington assignments at the Department of State included deputy executive director of the Bureau of Consular Affairs, and Operations Center watch officer. Dogu has an M.S. from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in Washington, and a B.A., B.B.A. and M.B.A. from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. She speaks Spanish, Turkish, and Arabic.

Christopher R. Hill | U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia

Christopher R. Hill, of Rhode Island, was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia, March 11. Previously, he served as the George Ball adjunct professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. He was dean of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, and then chief advisor to the chancellor for global engagement and professor of the practice of diplomacy at the University of Denver. Before retiring from the Foreign Service in 2010, Hill served as U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Korea, Poland, and Macedonia, as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and as head of the U.S. delegation to the Six-Party Talks on North Korea. Earlier in his diplomatic career, Hill served as an economic officer in Belgrade, deputy chief of mission at Embassy Tirana, and ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia. He has a B.A. from Bowdoin College and an M.S. from the Naval War College. Hill speaks Serbian, Polish, Macedonian, and French.

Randi Charno Levine | U.S. Ambassador to the Portuguese Republic

Randi Charno Levine, of New York, was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Ambassador to the Portuguese Republic, March 11. Previously, she served as commissioner at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington. Charno Levine also served as trustee at the Meridian International Center, trustee at the New Museum in New York, and Artemis council member She is a member of the Friends of the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a board member of FACES at New York University's Comprehensive Epilepsy Center, and a founding member of the High Line Council. She has also served as a former board member at the University of Arizona's Norton School of Family Consumer Science, the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, the Hamptons International Film Festival, and she is a published author. Charno Levine has a B.A. degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Patricia Mahoney | U.S. Ambassador to the Central African Republic

Patricia Mahoney (SFS), of Virginia, was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Ambassador to the Central African Republic, Dec. 20. Previously, she served as ambassador to the Republic of Benin. Prior to that, Mahoney served as acting deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) and the office director of EAP's Office of Mainland Southeast Asia. Earlier, she was the deputy chief of mission at Embassy Kampala, and deputy chief of mission at Embassy Kathmandu. She also served as director for South Asia at the National Security Council, deputy director of the Office of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh Affairs in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, the political chief at Embassy Colombo, and the political and economic chief at Embassy Kathmandu. Mahoney has a B.A. from Harvard University, an M.A. from

the University of Hawaii, and an M.S. from the National War College in Washington. She speaks French, Thai, Nepali, and Lao.

Virginia E. Palmer | U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana

Virginia E. Palmer (SFS), of Virginia, was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana, March 3. Previously, she served as principal deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of Energy Resources. She also served as acting assistant secretary since Jan. 2021. Prior to that, Palmer was the deputy commandant and international affairs advisor at the National Defense University's Eisenhower School. She served as ambassador to the Republic of Malawi, deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires at Embassy Pretoria, and deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires at Embassy Hanoi. Previous positions included deputy coordinator for counterterrorism, director of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs' Office of Economic Policy and assignments in Canada, Zimbabwe, the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Kenya. Palmer has a B.S.F.S. from Georgetown University, and an M.A. from the University of Virginia. She speaks Chinese and French.

Elizabeth "Beth" Van Schaack | U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Criminal Justice

Elizabeth "Beth" Van Schaack, was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Criminal Justice, March 16. Previously, she served as the Leah Kaplan visiting professor in human rights at Stanford Law School, and was the acting director of the Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic. She was also a faculty fellow with Stanford's Center for Human Rights and International Justice. Prior to returning to academia, Van Schaack served as deputy to the ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues in the Department of

State's Office of Global Criminal Justice. She has also spent time in private practice with Morrison & Foerster LLP and with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda. Van Schaack has a B.A. from Stanford University, a J.D. from Yale Law School, and a Ph.D. from the University of Leiden School of Law.

David John Young | U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi

David John Young (SFS), of Virginia, was appointed to serve as the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi, March 3. Previously he served as chargé d'affaires at Embassy Lusaka. Prior to that, he served as chargé d'affaires at Embassy Pretoria, deputy chief of mission at Embassy Abuja, and he held an earlier assignment as deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires in Lusaka. Young served as deputy director of the Office of the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, and executive assistant to the under secretary for democracy and global affairs. Earlier in his career, Young was a Pearson fellow in the Office of Jim Moran in the U.S. House of Representatives, a public affairs officer at Embassy Guatemala City, director of the Office of International Religious Freedom in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and he held positions in Vietnam and Panama, as well as domestic positions in the Operations Center, at the United Nations, and in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Bureau of International Organizations. Young has a B.A. degree from the University of Missouri, a diploma from Trinity College, University of Dublin, and an M.Div. degree and an M.A. from Boston University. He speaks Spanish.

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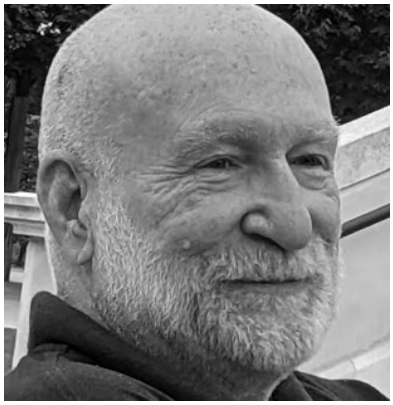
In Memoriam

Catherine Lichtblau, 97, died Feb. 10, in Rockville, Md. Lichtblau studied art and fabric design at Skidmore College and worked as an advertising copywriter in New York. When her husband George joined the Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research in 1952, she joined him in Washington. Together, they served at posts in Côte d'Ivoire, Korea, and Israel where Lichtblau pursued her lifelong interest in textiles. She exhibited her works in the Washington area, Korea, and Israel, was a weaver-in-residence at Glen Echo Park, and collaborated with a Washington-based couturier. Lichtblau is survived by two children, Julia and Marcus; and two grandchildren, Zoë and Gabriel.

Azita Raji, 60, died Feb. 6, in Belvedere, Calif. Born in Iran, Raji completed high school in Switzerland, where she competed nationally as a downhill skier and chess player, before moving to the United States at the age of 17. She became a U.S. citizen in 1988. Raji received a B.A. from Barnard College, and an M.B.A. from Columbia University. In her early career, Raji served as an international investment banker, holding senior positions at J.P. Morgan & Co., Salomon Brothers, and Drexel Burnham. In 2012, Raji served as national finance vice-chair and chair of the swing state victory fund for the Obama campaign. She was a national advisory board member of the Democratic National Committee, a member of the Obama for America National Finance Committee, served on The President's Commission on White House Fellows, and she was also appointed as a commissioner of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. In 2016, President

Barack Obama appointed Raji as the first female U.S. ambassador to Sweden (and first Iranian-American to serve as a U.S. ambassador), a position she served in until January 2017. Raji is survived by her husband, Gary Syman; and five daughters.


Kenneth “Ken” Lee Stanley, 68, died Feb. 9, in Chantilly, Va. Stanley served in the U.S. Army, prior to entering the Foreign Service in 1985. He served at posts in Israel, India, Russia, Germany, and Thailand before retiring in 2008. Stanley then went to work for computer and technology companies CACI International, Inc. and the Science Applications International Corporation. He enjoyed history, travel, and spending time with his family. Stanley was survived by his wife, Tatyana; two children, Melinda and Valery; two sisters, Sherrie and Hope; and one grandson, Lucas.

Noella B. Taylor, 72, died Nov. 26, 2021, in Greenville, S.C. Taylor joined the Foreign Service and served for 22 years at posts in Moscow, Dublin, Stockholm, Brussels, and Luxembourg. She retired in 2014, and enjoyed traveling and reminiscing with her friends. Taylor is survived by her husband, William; and a daughter, Tracy.

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