

BOSTON COLLEGE
 **CHRIJ** Center for
Human Rights
and
International Justice

2023 Summer Newsletter
2022-2023 Annual Report



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Letter from the Co-directors

Dear Friends,

“May you live in interesting times” is an old, apocryphal blessing. But some view it as a curse. For those of us who are deeply committed to human rights, our times are certainly interesting and challenging in historically significant ways. We have been recently challenged in particular by massive human rights issues arising from climate change, war, poverty, and migration enforcement. We have also been inspired by scholars and practitioners of both the left and the right to defend, justify, and update the ideals of human rights—grounded in human dignity, equality, and equity—as well as our essential commitments to human rights praxis. As a university center, we also continue to embrace the ideals that have long sustained the Center for Human Rights and International Justice and which we believe also undergird the best traditions of Boston College. We are thus gratified to see the continuation of our mission to nurture a new generation of human rights scholars and practitioners. Still, whether we are blessed or cursed is always a question at the forefront of our minds.

This summer, I, Brinton, have continued my slow journey towards healing from an unexpected health challenge midyear - and am happy to report that I am inching roughly forward in time to make a previously planned rewirement (aka transition). Unable to travel, I have been able to finalize work based on previous field research including five articles/book chapters, three in print, two in press, co-authored with former students and colleagues - all interdisciplinary and transnational in focus and grounded in liberation and decolonial psychologies and healing justice. I hope to continue working with Dan co-directing the CHRJI for another year while I complete a final semester sabbatical and turn to teaching the CHRJI seminar one more time in the spring, and continue working as co-Editor-in-Chief at the International Journal of Transitional Justice. This transition will give me more time for completing a book on my nearly three decades of accompanying communities in rural Guatemala and their transnational families here in the United States, for

collaborations with the Martín-Baró Initiative for Wellbeing and Human Rights, and with other NGOs of which I am a member. PLEASE JOIN US on October 26 in the Heights Room at BC to celebrate the CHRJI's first decade and a half as we make another transition.

I, Dan, continue work on my next book, *Deportation World: Dynamic Sovereignty, Human Rights, and the Evolution of Migrants' Rights*, (to be published by Harvard University Press). The book considers how deportation (broadly defined) has grown into a global phenomenon, swiftly and often mercilessly expelling immigrants to countries where they often lack a social support structure or economic opportunity, with increasing cooperation between countries to facilitate the process. It also examines the evolution of state sovereign power from a rather passive, reactive phenomenon to a much more dynamic one, embodying projections of state power far beyond state borders, bi-and multi-lateral state cooperation (such as between the US and Mexico and between Italy and Libya) and regional initiatives of increasing sophistication and scope (such as that of the European Union). I am also happy to have been invited to create a new first year law school class entitled Introduction to Human Rights, Refugee and Humanitarian Law, which I will continue to teach next year. This class undertook a field trip—supervised and accompanied by me and Professor Daniela Urosa—to the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, DC. More about that trip can be found in an article in this issue.

My class also benefited from the participation of a third year law student, Heather Odell, who undertook a semester long externship at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San José, Costa Rica. We hope and believe that this experience will be a precedent for future students and will also facilitate future productive collaborations.

Headlining our public programming this year, the Center hosted a major symposium last October entitled “Structural Racism in the United

States: Engaging the Interstices of Migration, Indigenous Peoples' Rights, and the Legacies of Settler Colonialism.” Natsu Taylor Saito, Regents' Professor Emerita at Georgia State University's College of Law, opened the symposium with a keynote address on the evening of October 6 as part of the Lowell Humanities Lecture Series. Following that, a full day of programs included four panels exploring the institutional and societal embodiments of structural racism from the perspective of academic, professional and community-based theory and practice in three particular areas: struggles for self-determination, claims for reparations, and immigrants' rights claims. The panelists brought forth commonalities and some competing claims among indigenous peoples, Black descendants of enslaved people, and migrants in the US as we considered various forms of reparation including land, money, memorialization. The keynote and the panels may be accessed and viewed on the [Center's YouTube channel](#).

We also welcomed Daniela Urosa, an adjunct professor at BC Law School, as she took on a part-time role with the Center as Project Developer this past year. She collaborated with Center personnel to develop programming and public presentations focused on the work of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). These have been designed to emphasize the contributions of select IACHR cases to human rights, and redress or repair for violations of human rights. They also examine the ways in which multiple disciplines have contributed to success in the defense of human rights, as well as looking at the implications of the cases for these disciplines. One presentation this past year featured activists from Guatemala who fought to keep their community radio station open as the Guatemalan government sought effectively to shut it down. The radio station's staff spoke of their efforts to get the station back on the air after an IACHR ruling supporting their claims ordered the Guatemalan government to allow it. Another presentation in February by the former Vice-President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights addressed the human rights of LGBTI people in the Americas and the role of the Inter-American System

as a resource to bring claims to protect them, and is recapped in this issue. The Zoom communications platform has facilitated our inclusion of bilingual presentations as we seek multiple ways of supporting our commitment to language justice throughout our programming.

Also featured in the issue is a profile of alumnus John Carter, who recounts his path of discernment which led him to BC, our certificate program, and now to his new position at Wake Forest University in their Program for Leadership and Character.

CHRIJ spring events, in brief

This issue also includes recaps of our spring programming. Professor Lisa Forman of the University of Toronto was joined by Phillip Landrigan, Director of the Global Public Health Program and the Global Observatory on Planetary Health at BC to discuss the human right to vaccines and concomitant negative health effects caused by a lack of vaccine equity globally, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what can be done about it.

The CHRIJ was delighted to co-sponsor the former US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues David Scheffer for the Owen M. Kupferschmid Memorial Lecture. He delivered a presentation on the current state of international criminal justice, citing examples from the ongoing war in Ukraine. In March, we hosted a screening of Deann Borshay Liem's documentary, *Crossings*, which chronicles the 2015 efforts of a group of 30 women peacemakers from across the globe, including including two Nobel Peace laureates, feminist icon Gloria Steinem, and retired Colonel Ann Wright as well as Center co-director Brinton Lykes, as they crossed the DMZ on the Korean peninsula to call for a formal end to the Korean War and a peace agreement to replace the now 70-year-old armistice, and pressing for peace including the denuclearization and demilitarization of the peninsula. A special panel featuring several of the women from the film was on hand to comment on the ongoing efforts of WomenCrossDMZ and answer questions after the screening.

We welcomed Luis Moreno Ocampo, deputy prosecutor in Argentina's Trial of the military Junta during the 1968-1973 "Dirty War" there, and first prosecutor of the International Crim-

inal Court, for a showing of the Golden Globe winning film, *Argentina, 1985*. The film recreates the efforts of the team of prosecutors, including Moreno Ocampo, who sought to bring military leaders of the Argentina dictatorship, during which the torture, extrajudicial murder and forced disappearances of civilians was a systematic occurrence in the 1970s and 1980s, to justice for its human rights abuses.

We also hosted Professor Matiangai Sirleaf of the University of Maryland School of Law for a look at hierarchies and histories of human rights as they have developed over time, and some of the tensions involved between them. Psychologist and sociologist Arancha García del Soto joined us for a presentation on migrant women and their dual roles as caregivers and defenders of human rights. And, Francisco de Roux Rengifo, SJ, President of the Truth Commission in Colombia, gave a presentation on the vital role of truth commissions to publicly state truths about human and ecological destruction as part of healing and reconciliation in societies. These events are recapped herein, and many are available on the [Center's YouTube channel](#), also accessible through our website.

Students

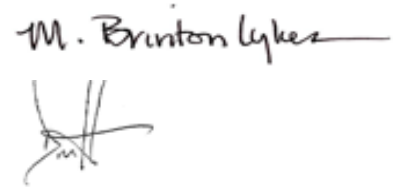
The Center benefited from the contributions of three undergraduate seniors and a graduate assistant on its staff this past year. The students worked across academic disciplines collaborating on projects of the Center's co-directors and affiliated faculty. We have been especially pleased to hear from students in our internships over the past several years letting us know of their recent endeavors, such as entrance into law school, and citing the experience of the internship as being instrumental in helping them along their nascent career paths as they continue human rights work.

Academics

One student from the School of Theology and Ministry completed our graduate level certificate program this year. He was recognized at our year-end event in May, when we also heard presentations from five graduate and undergraduate students from across BC's schools, on the findings of their research conducted with the support of summer research grants from the Center last year. We are also pleased to have

awarded five research grants to students to pursue human rights-related research this summer and delighted that co-director Lykes will teach the CHRIJ seminar in the spring of 2024. We at the Center look forward to seeing many of you during the upcoming academic year at our events and beyond, and thank you for your continued interest and support of our work.

Sincerely,



M. Brinton Lykes & Daniel Kanstroom
Co-Directors
Boston College Center for Human Rights and
International Justice

About Us

The Center for Human Rights and International Justice addresses the increasingly interdisciplinary needs of human rights work through academic programs, applied research, and the interaction of scholars with practitioners. The Center's Co-Directors are Law School Professor Daniel Kanstroom and Lynch School of Education and Human Development Professor of Community-Cultural Psychology M. Brinton Lykes. Mr. Timothy Karcz is the Assistant Director.

Center News & Notes

Center welcomes new undergraduate research assistants

The Center is pleased to welcome seniors **Catherine Brewer**, **Saya Khandhar** and **Ashley Shackelton** as undergraduate research assistants to the Center this summer and AY23-24. We are also pleased to welcome back **Heather Brennan** as a graduate assistant for a second year in AY23-24.

Center welcomes back Professor Daniela Urosa

We are also glad to welcome back **Professor Daniela Urosa** in the AY23-24 year in the role of Project Developer for a second year. Urosa is a faculty member in both BC Law School and the BC Department of Romance Languages. In her role as Project Developer, she has been developing programming in conjunction with the Center, drawing on her extensive expertise with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in particular. We are excited to continue this productive partnership this coming year.



Urosa



In Memoriam: José Daniel Chich González

The Center is saddened to report that in August 2023, **José Daniel Chich González**, died in a motorcycle accident in his native Guatemala. José Daniel had collaborated with the Center on several participatory and action research projects and was a co-author of the CHRIJ [2016 publication, *Documenting the lives of 21st Century Mayan families “on the move,”*](#) which summarized the findings of years of work he helped conduct in Zacualpa in the Quiché region of Guatemala. He and Luisa Hernández Simaj, colleagues at the Human Rights and Migration Office at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Zacualpa, came to Boston College in 2016 to present the research at a Center event (photo), and in various migrant organizations in the Greater Boston area.

He leaves behind his wife and two school aged children.

BC Law Human Rights Practicum Students Visit the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Court for Human Rights

On March 24, Center Project Developer Daniela Urosa and Center Co-director Daniel Kanstroom, both professors at BC Law School, accompanied law school students from their respective classes on a trip to Washington, DC to visit the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Court for Human Rights. Urosa's class, the International Human Rights Practicum, is an upperclassman legal clinic featuring hands on legal work, and Kanstroom's class, Introduction to Human Rights, Refugees, and Humanitarian Law course, is for first year students to engage with a broad survey of human rights law. Students from both classes, with financial support from the Center, visited the principal organs of the Inter-American System of Human Rights (IASHR).

The IASHR is the human rights protection system of the Organization of American States (OAS) and is the world's oldest regional organization, dating back to the First International Conference of American States, held in Washington, DC from October 1889 to April 1890. It incorporates 35 countries from the Americas and the Caribbean, including the United States.

Visiting the OAS provided the students with the opportunity to engage with how human rights are protected within the region and see how the academic concepts they have been working with are used in practice by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to expand human rights across the Americas.



The students began the morning with a guided tour of the historical OAS headquarters by Pablo Zuñiga, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Public Diplomacy. The tour included not only a description of the functions of the IASHR, but the

meaning of its architecture and artwork as a demonstration of unity across the region. Students were shown the Simón Bolívar room, where the OAS' political arm, the Permanent Council, meets, and which includes interpretation facilities for the four official languages of the OAS: Spanish, English, French, and Portuguese. The tour also included the Hall of the Americas where the highest-ranking meetings take place as well as speeches by Heads of State and treaty signings.

After seeing the various aspects of the OAS, the students received a specialized briefing on social inclusion and human rights in the hemisphere exclusively provided for the BC delegation by Maricarmen Plata, the OAS Secretary for Access to Rights and Equity. She spoke about the evolving climate surrounding refugee rights in North, Central and South America and the vulnerability of migrant populations, especially when they have intersecting identities, such as women and LGBTQI folks.

The day continued with students visiting the IACHR which included a special session with the Commission's members to discuss the fundamental challenges and topics of the regional protection of human rights. The session included how petitions and cases are filed before the IACHR, which have a particular emphasis on migrants' rights, human mobility, and indigenous peoples' rights as well as the process for precautionary measures.

The tour of the OAS and the special IACHR session provided students with a wider context for how human rights cases arise and the most pressing issues facing the region. As some of the participating students had been working in the International Human Rights Practicum clinical course, their work in the classroom has been hand in hand with the work of the IASHR.

During the semester, the students had been introduced to global human rights protection systems, specifically the IASHR, learning about its normative framework, protection mechanisms, rights protected, and principal entities. Professor Kanstroom cited one of the most important reasons for the visit as exposing the US law students to another legal system since "the Inter-American system is much more well-developed in terms of migrants' rights and other forms of human rights than US constitutional law."

Rosa Felibert, the academic assistant for Kanstroom's human rights course, stated that, "it was incredibly apparent that students were critically engaging with the conversations we were having at the OAS and IACHR." The students were able to connect material from class to the sessions of the day and the tour allowed them to explore how these ideas function practically within the system. Being able to attend the OAS and ask the members questions allowed the students to learn in a way that is not feasible within the classroom, which provided a meaningful educational experience.



Visiting the OAS allowed the students to go beyond their classroom learning and see human rights work in the hemisphere, and even globally, in action. By organizing this visit, Urosa and Kanstroom provided their students with a tangible sense of the successes and challenges of the OAS and the importance of furthering the legal protection of human rights across the region.

Winter 2024 Events

Screening of “Crossings” with Special Guest Panel

On March 16, the Center co-hosted an event with the Boston College Asian Studies and Asian American Studies Departments, with a special screening of *Crossings*, a 2022 documentary following an international group of female peacemakers and activists as they work to call for an end to the 70-year war that continues to divide the Korean peninsula. These women, including world renowned activists like Gloria Steinem and Christine Ahn, travel across the highly polarized demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea and fight to overcome challenges and biases, as they endeavor to build solidarity and a new path to peace for the Korean people.

In addition to the inspiring film, the event featured a guest panel of women who were part of the group in Korea and appear in the film, to talk on the topic of collective action and female peacemakers. The panel featured *Crossings* director Deann Borshay Liem as well as Suzy Kim (Associate Professor of Korean History at Rutgers University), Kozue Akibayashi (Professor at the Graduate School of Global Studies at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan), Lisa Natividad (Associate Professor in the Division of Social Work at the University of Guam), and Brinton Lykes (Boston

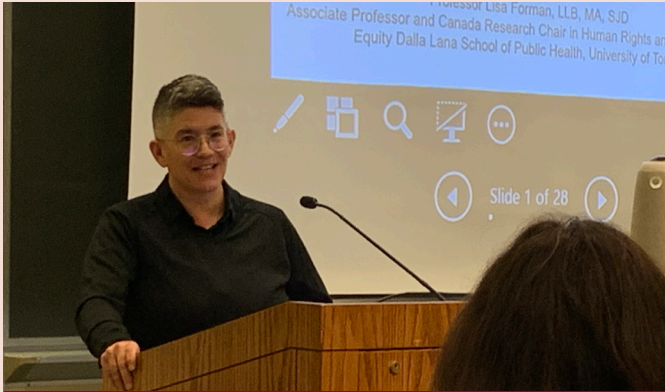
College Center for Human Rights and International Justice Co-Director and Professor of Community-Cultural Psychology).

Christine Ahn, Korean-American peace activist and foreign policy analyst, acts as the rallying lead of the group as the film follows 30 intrepid female activists as they tread the forbidden territory of the DMZ to draw global attention to the unresolved Korean war and demand a seat at the table for women in bringing about peace in the region. The groundbreaking mission is captured with intimate interviews and framed with historic newsreels of the Korean War and dramatic contemporary news coverage, to ground the reality of the documentary style. *Crossings* tackles how, although the Korean War was halted by the 1953 armistice, a peace treaty was never signed and now, 70 years later, the threat of renewed fighting looms greater than ever. As American troops continue to occupy the Korean peninsula, North Korea and the US remain staunch adversaries, and millions of Koreans are separated from their family members. US-North Korea relations have proved to be violently unsettling, threatening the daily lives of innocent Korean men, children, and (importantly) women.

The documentary and subsequent guest panel speakers highlighted the importance of collective action, global solidarity, and the rise of international feminist peace organizing efforts. Countries and organizations all across the globe have rapidly developing conceptions of peace and security studies that center women and feminist theory at the heart of the conversation, as feminist peace theory asserts a need to enhance the visibility of women in conflicts. The rise of the “Women, Peace, Security” field of study and advocacy promotes a space for international, feminist peacemaking, with renowned leaders like Christine Ahn and Gloria Steinem leading the fray. *Crossings* brings this conversation of the intersection between women, peace, and security to the forefront and celebrates these international female activists as they build a movement in seemingly impossible conditions and inspire women, and people, everywhere to make a monumental change despite the odds.



(L-R): Lykes, Borshay Liem, Akibayashi and Natividad



Lisa Forman

The Human Right to Access Vaccines: The Case of COVID-19

On January 26, 2023, Boston College Law School, in partnership with the Center and the Schiller Institute's program for Global Public Health and the Common Good, sponsored a panel to discuss the human right to access vaccines with a focus on the case of COVID-19. The panel, moderated by BC law professor Katie Young, included speakers Phillip Landrigan and Lisa Forman.

Professor Landrigan is a pediatrician, a public health physician, and an epidemiologist, as well as a director of BC's Global Public Health program and Global Observatory on Planetary Health. He has had experience in the campaign to eradicate smallpox, and led efforts to decrease lead pollution. Landrigan's central argument in his remarks was that vaccines are among the most powerful tools for preventing disease for people of all ages and in countries of all income levels. He listed the successes of vaccines in eradicating smallpox and rinderpest, and reducing the morbidity and mortality of measles, rubella, yellow fever and several other diseases. Specifically, he stated that vaccines reduced COVID-19's mortality rate by 90%. While vaccines are highly effective and even cost efficient, Landrigan also explained that vaccine programs require surveillance to track and map cases, trained personnel to conduct vaccine distribution, expansive delivery strategies, public education, sufficient funding, and mechanisms to ensure equitable access.

Professor Forman is from the School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, where she is Canada Research Chair in Human Rights and Global Health Equity. She has worked extensively on the right to health in international human rights law and global health. Forman discussed the legal framework for a human rights claim to access to vaccines. In the case of COVID-19, the majority of vaccines have been administered in high income countries who bought out and hoarded vaccines, leaving very few available to lower income countries, subsequently creating legal and political debates on the intellectual property rights of pharmaceutical patents. Forman's talk drew from a paper published in the *Health and Human Rights Journal* entitled "An Inquiry into State Agreement and Practice on the International Law Status of the Human Right to Medicines." She posed the question: is there a right to vaccines and medicines in international human rights law?

The primary claim lies in the right to health, which is most authoritatively established in international law through the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 1976. While medicines and vaccines are not specified within the Covenant, Forman argued that it is difficult to not include them as part of the right to health. In fact, at the international level of human rights, medicines and vaccines have indeed been read into the right to health through a range of comments issued by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which oversees the Covenant and its interpretation. As the COVID-19 pandemic advanced, the Committee moved to explicitly articulate a right to access safe, effective, and affordable vaccines as a derivative of the right to health and the right to benefit from scientific progress.

Although these statements and comments are influential, they are not binding and fail to fully address the right to access. The UN General Assembly on this topic recognizes a right to access as part of the right to health with some extent of disagreement. Forman also addressed the contemporaneous drafting of the Pandemic Treaty by the World Health Organization as an opportunity to turn the right to vaccines and medicines into a legally binding right; however, the broader politics of access and intellectual property rights actively prevent this progression. Both speakers generally concluded that we are in the middle of the evolution of the right to health as it pertains to international human rights law and there is undoubtedly a long way to go.

Lights and Shadows of LGBTI Human Rights in the Americas: Approach from the Inter-American System

On February 7, 2023, the Center partnered with BC's Latin American Studies program, the Organization for Latin American Affairs, and the Latin American Law Students Association to sponsor a talk with Flavia Piovesan about LGBTI rights in the Inter-American System. Piovesan is a professor of law with affiliations at several international academic institutions and former vice-president of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. She centered her talk around two questions: what has the transformative impact of the Inter-American System and the protection of LGBTI rights in the region been? And what are the main challenges and perspectives to strengthen the protection of LGBTI rights in the region?

Professor Piovesan argued that the Inter-American System has fostered the destabilization of dictatorial regimes and demands justice and an end to impunity. It strengthens democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and emphasizes the protection of vulnerable groups. Piovesan also recognized three main roles of the Inter-American System: 1) establishing human rights standards, 2) compensating national deficits, and 3) fomenting a new dynamic of power among social actors. In her experience working for the Inter-American System, Piovesan identified a victim-centric approach, sound jurisprudence, and a goal of comprehensive reparations as the core dimensions of the system.

Furthermore, Piovesan highlighted the importance of intersectionality when thinking about LGBTI human rights. Transgender women in Latin America have a life expectancy of only 35 years as a result of cruelty and violence, whereas cisgender women in the region have a life expectancy of 80 to 85 years. LGBTI persons face challenges of demonization, criminalization and pathologization. Expressing a sexual orientation beyond the binary logic is culturally viewed as a sin, a crime or a disease. The Inter-American Court believes that we all have a right to give meaning to our existence through our choices, our values and our convictions. As Latin America is the region with the highest number of reported cases of LGBTI violence, this issue requires significant and urgent attention. Accordingly, the Court has increasingly concentrated their mandates on combating violence based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity, with hopes to reduce such incidences of violence.



Flavia Piovesan

Two recent cases decided by the Inter-American Court have been particularly influential in addressing LGBTI human rights. *Azul Rojas Marín vs. Perú*, in March of 2020, was the first case brought before the Court that addressed violence against LGBTI persons. In this case, where a gay man suffered extreme physical and psychological violence as a result of his sexual orientation, the Court demanded Perú to adopt a specific protocol to investigate cases of violence against LGBTI persons. In *Vicki Hernández vs. Honduras* in March of 2021, a human rights activist and transgender woman was brutally killed. For the first time, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights argued that the Inter-American Convention on Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women must not discriminate against transgender women, a historic victory for LGBTI rights. These cases set a precedent of clearly established rights for LGBTI persons and demanded that states enact anti-discrimination legislation and gender identity laws.

Continued laws and legal policies that protect LGBTI individuals are only one part of the solution. There is also a need for cultural and social change. Many countries in the region still criminalize LGBTI persons, however whereas in 2018 there were 11 such countries, now that number has dropped to six, providing us with an empirical basis to be hopeful for future progress. There is also an issue of far-right populism in recent leadership. Indeed, when leaders of a nation hold homophobic or transphobic perspectives, there are marked increases in violations of LGBTI rights. Finally, conservative religious groups have argued that freedom of religion is hindered by LGBTI rights, however Piovesan stated that the Inter-American System holds that equality and non-discrimination are *jus cogens*, or a peremptory norm in international law, and favors LGBTI rights in such disputes. She ended with a quote for Jurgen Habermas on human rights' long tradition of resistance that is vital to build democratic and pluralistic societies, and she added that the LGBTI rights movement nurtures the quest for social change "with anger, hope, and belief that we can all make a difference."



David Scheffer

Photo credit: BC Law Magazine / Vicki Sanders

Owen M. Kupferschmid Memorial Lecture: Ambassador David Scheffer on International Criminal Justice

On March 13, the Center joined with BC Law's Owen M. Kupferschmid Holocaust/Human Rights Project to host David Scheffer for a discussion on international criminal justice. Highly influential in the realm of international law, Scheffer is the former US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues during the period between 1997 and 2001. He was also UN Secretary General's Special Expert on UN Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials from 2012 to 2018.

Scheffer began his lecture by noting a revival of the importance of international law—specifically, international criminal law—in recent years due to the blatant acts of aggression seen against Ukraine in the Russo-Ukrainian War. He labels these atrocity crimes, which include genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and aggression. In the last thirty years, seven major war crimes tribunals have been created since the initial ones took place in Nuremberg and Tokyo after World War II, marking a tremendous amount of structural and institutional building to support international criminal justice. These tribunals include

those for the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Lebanon, Kosovo, and the International Criminal Court. Their proceedings have been extremely influential in law building and the rapid development of international criminal law, propelling the field of international law as a whole. Additionally, we now have war crime statutes, crimes against humanity statutes, and genocide statutes in domestic laws all over the world for national prosecution that continue to see increased expansion. And though the tribunals were not necessarily conceived to deter future violence, research suggests that they do indeed have deterrent value.

However, these relative successes do not signal an end of impunity. In fact, the recently released Atlas of Impunity, published by the Eurasia Group and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, calls for a shift in perspectives on impunity beyond judicial accountability to an understanding of the wider reach of impunity in all factors of life.

In the final part of his lecture, Scheffer spoke on the situation in Ukraine, where massive atrocity crimes are being committed daily. He remarked how there has never been such an active, investigative response to such atrocity crimes, which is a demonstration of the impact of the last thirty years of international criminal law development. Due to the widespread international efforts, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine has more than 70,000 war crimes cases being investigated.

In Scheffer's own experience working toward the creation of the Yugoslav Tribunal in 1993, people and governments were not experienced or available to dedicate resources to the issue at that time. Now, he is proud to note a significant increase in the mobilization of resources toward international criminal justice.

In prosecuting the crime of aggression in Ukraine, where the International Criminal Court does not have jurisdiction, Ambassador Scheffer suggests that another international tribunal is necessary. He believes international law must continue to be created through novel pathways. As crimes against humanity persist in many regions and nations across the globe, Scheffer made clear that international criminal law has a long way to go to properly extend the reach of international criminal justice.

“From ‘Judgment at Nuremberg’ to ‘Argentina 1985’: How Do Films Define the Narrative about War Crimes and Justice?” with Luis Moreno Ocampo

On March 21, the Center, in collaboration with the Boston College Law School and its Kupferschmid Holocaust and Human Rights Project, the BC Latin American Law Students Association, and the BC Organization for Latin American Affairs, hosted a screening of *Argentina, 1985*. The film—which debuted in 2022 and won the 2023 Golden Globe® for Best Picture, Non-English Language and was a 2023 Academy Award Best International Featured Film nominee—is inspired by the true story of Julio Strassera and Luis Moreno Ocampo as they, and their young, underdog legal team, go toe-to-toe in a legal battle with Argentina’s bloodiest military dictatorship. The film follows the team as they attempt to prosecute the remaining leaders two years after the military dictatorship (or Military Junta) was finally toppled.

The Center was also pleased to welcome Luis Moreno Ocampo himself, one of the film’s producers and the real life deputy prosecutor in Argentina’s Trial of the Juntas and first prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, who gave commentary and took questions from attendees after the event.

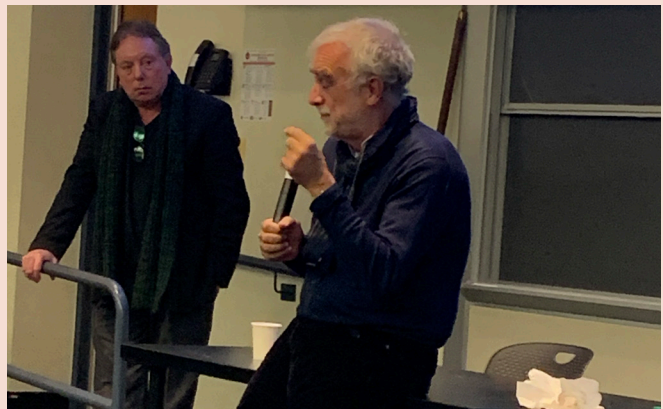
The film follows the journey of public prosecutor Julio Strassera in 1985 as he is chosen to bring a case against the military Junta for alleged crimes against humanity. The new democratic government is only two years old and fragile in the wake of the last military dictatorship, and Strassera has to fight an uphill battle as the military courts declined to press charges and the Junta have retained the services of experienced lawyers. Struggling to find lawyers for his prosecution team—as no senior lawyers are willing to risk their reputations or safety—Strassera is forced to accept the help of Luis Moreno Ocampo, his assigned deputy prosecutor with a military family background. Together, they build a ragtag team of inexperienced young law graduates and lawyers.

Throughout the case, Strassera, Moreno Ocampo, and their team face physical threats and the loss of family and friends over their position, but they remain resolute. When it came time for the trial, the threats and attempts at corruption did not cease, but Strassera’s argument and the witness

testimonies are deeply compelling—detailing torture, disappearances, and inexcusable atrocities. The trial was recorded on cameras and broadcast worldwide, allowing the team to make their case not just to the judges in the courtroom, but to the people of Argentina and even those around the world. Strassera’s infamous closing speech ends with the moving cry, “Nunca Más! [‘never again’]” which rallied supporters around the world. Though all the junta on trial do receive varying sentences, the film ends with Strassera unsatisfied with their punishment and already working on an appeal.

Following the screening, Moreno Ocampo spoke to the audience, detailing his personal relationship with Strassera, the nature of legalizing human rights, and his personal wish for his home country. He stated that “this movie represents the unity of Argentina,” and shared his wish that the movie could stand as a beacon of hope and progress for the future generations of Argentina. He also expressed his hope for the international relevance of such a landmark case, reemphasizing the importance of a “never again” mentality as expressed by Strassera in the film.

He told the audience to remember that the use of law against corruption is a never-ending war where, “you win one round, you go to the next,” and “if you stop fighting, you lose,” so never stop fighting. Transitional justice is complex and international law is beholden to the actors who interpret it, but Moreno Ocampo expressed his hope for the future and his excitement at the more globally minded and active younger generations he sees today. Explaining how the atrocities of the Junta unfortunately follow themes of governmental corruption that never seem to fade, Moreno Ocampo inspired his audience with his story and challenged those present to look towards a new phase of justice, one where we look towards the future and prevent crimes, rather than reflecting back on the past and punishing abuses.



Luis Moreno Ocampo

Hierarchies and Histories of Human Rights

On March 27, the Center hosted an event with Matiangai Sirleaf, Professor of Law at the University of Maryland's Nathan Patz Law Center. Sirleaf's talk tackled the questions (1) does the genealogy of human rights matter? (2) why is the history in this field important and potentially controversial? and, (3) most importantly, who do the different histories center (and decenter)? Throughout the event, Sirleaf led the audience through an examination and evaluation of the main critiques of international human rights law, and a breakdown of how historical hierarchies can sway our conception of what "human rights" should be.

Sirleaf spoke about the importance of engaging with critical perspectives on our modern human rights discourse, and the need to properly reflect on questions of race, internationalism, decolonization, imperialism, and democracy as they intersect with the history, foundation, and implementation of our present day "human rights regime." The beginning of her talk tackled the many different arguments for the origin of human rights, spanning the Enlightenment, the Haitian Revolution, the Declaration of the Rights of Negro Peoples of the World, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Abolition movement, and the Anti-Colonial movement. All of these different eras brought forth different forms of human rights: the Enlightenment (17th-19th century) brought social and political change, new philosophical thinking, and ultimately the American and French Revolutions; the Haitian Revolution of the 1700s, the first successful slave revolt; the abolition of slavery in the 1800s which featured an internationalization of human rights; the Declaration of the Rights of Negro Peoples of the World (DRNPW) of the 1920s, which was one of the first declarations to link broad categories of rights; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of the 1940s, which established international liability and prosecution against human rights violations and empowered individuals worldwide; and the anti-colonial movement (19th-20th century), which finally heralded equal political rights for all, not just those limited to a privileged few. However, Sirleaf cautioned against allowing our fervor for human rights to cause us to gloss over deeper analysis and encouraged the audience to question the utility and impact of these eras, particularly their ties to imperial projects. Why are the Haitian Revolution and the DRNPW often so overlooked in the conversation of human rights? Can you disentangle



Matiangai Sirleaf

the abolition movement from its white, pro-colonial origins? How can we bolster the UDHR as a leading document in human rights legislation when its preamble was written by the president of apartheid South Africa and colonial injuries were ignored?

Linear progress narratives are a dangerous and suspect way of constructing history. Sirleaf spoke to the concept of historical narratives, and how what we remember and forget in history defines our understanding and study of the field, and the history of human rights is no different. In fact, she concluded her talk by emphasizing how the origin story of human rights does not really even matter today, as human rights are a social construction that results from our action, formed in our belief in these rights, to make a better world that we envision; they are ever evolving ideas, social movements, practices, institutions, legal regimes, and systems that cannot be tied to one perfect story of progression. Overemphasizing the connection between human rights and the spread of civilization only further bolsters the malicious sword of internationalizing "civility"—a problem humanity has been facing for centuries now. Everyone wants to have the "right" way to do rights, but the truth is, no one has all the answers yet. We do not know how to best use human rights and we are still learning. Instead of trying to have all the answers, what we need to do is critically look at our human rights discourses and acknowledge the colonial legacies still embedded in our conception of morals and rights. Central to human rights is the idea of furthering the inclusion of excluded peoples, histories, and experiences. Human rights arise out of solidarity and human movements and can always change, and Sirleaf concluded her talk by encouraging her young audience to be the next generation of actors for that change.

“Migrant Women and Their Double Role as Caregivers and Human Rights Defenders: Reasons for Hope”

On March 31, the Center hosted Dr. Arancha García del Soto, a Spanish psychologist and sociologist who has been working on human rights issues since 1993. She began her work by accompanying migrants in the Balkans fleeing conflict there and subsequently continued fighting for human rights in other regions of the world including West Africa, Sri Lanka and Colombia. She has collaborated with human rights organizations including Families of the Missing and Women in Exile as well as having worked with Colombia's Truth Commission.

She began her talk by introducing a piece of art that visually represents how women put together the fabrics of their life experiences and also highlighting their resilience. Using this artwork as a foundation for her talk, she continued on this thread by describing how her work revolves around collecting the testimonies of migrant women. While this methodology may not appear to be particularly academic, in reality García del Soto argued that the simple act of listening and accompaniment can produce profound realizations and the importance of storytelling in understanding conflict and migration. The goal of her work is first to acknowledge the great diversity of women's experiences while also being attuned to the similarities and differences in their demands for social transformation.

García del Soto introduced how gender roles appear in the face of conflict and the effect of these situations on families. Women are often forced to take on extra labor in the family through housework and emotional support. They also take on the role of caregiver at much higher rates than men, both in formal and informal contexts.

In Spain, migrant women make up 80% of caregivers, most of which are from Latin America and Asia, followed by other European and African women. The population of migrant women working as caregivers equates to 20% of the total population of working women in the country. These positions highlight how women are often taken advantage of due to their roles in society, where they are often working informally and therefore lack benefits such as healthcare. Additionally, migrant women in these roles are particularly vulnerable due to their lack of social support networks and

having insufficient access to information regarding their rights as workers.

García del Soto quoted a few women in Spain she has worked with who expressed that they wished they had known more about what rights they had when they began their jobs, but were too busy to search for other positions with better working conditions. She demonstrated how migrant women working as caregivers serve as a powerful example of the cycle of human rights violations and violence.

She continued by describing how social roles assigned by gender are exacerbated during times of conflict and war. This phenomenon contributes to shifts in the pattern of labor women experience that in turn affects their ability to be activists and above all, their emotional wellbeing.

García del Soto described the first shift of labor as the invisible caregiving done in the private sphere and how women often lose out on personal time and thus must sacrifice so that others may enjoy themselves. The second shift is women working as caregivers and the effect on their role in the economy. The third is their work as defenders of human rights and, in this context, García del Soto explained the importance of how women respond to conflict and its effects. The fourth shift is the activist work women do behind the scenes to organize. This work is usually invisible, yet requires significant time and effort, as protests, marches and other such activities are not small endeavors.

She finished her talk by describing the importance of women finding community and solidarity in sharing their stories with other women like them. Despite coming from different backgrounds and contexts, sharing stories cultivates a sense of community and connection, which García del Soto sees as vital.



Dr. Arancha García del Soto



Francisco de Roux

“The Necessity and Challenges of Facing and Telling the Truth in the Face of Human and Ecological Destruction: Truth and Reconciliation Commissions’ Contributions to Healing”

On April 14, the Center hosted Francisco de Roux, SJ, an economist, philosopher, author, and champion of human rights from Colombia. His 40 year career fighting for peace in Colombia was spurred by the 60 year civil war within the country, which he discussed at length during this talk. De Roux began by contextualizing the conflict for the audience detailing how 120,000 Colombians were killed, with six civilians having died in the war for every person killed who was actively participating in the armed conflict. Furthermore, seven million people were displaced, especially indigenous people and Afro-Colombians. Both of these groups are particularly important to the creation of the cultural fabric and the protection of the natural beauty of the nation.

While these numbers describe a grave and devastating war, de Roux emphasized that ultimately, they fail to fully encapsulate the impact of this conflict. Instead, the focus must be on the suffering faced by all those affected, especially within the context of a truth commission. He argued that solely focusing on numbers fails to show the reality of war. De Roux stressed that when beginning a truth commission, you must look into the “hell” of the victims and the perpetrators who have chosen to accept responsibility. Facing the emotional toll of this conflict is vital to uncovering the truth in a way that meaningfully allows the country and its citizens to move forward.

As a priest, de Roux contemplated the role of religion in the civil war and how a lack of morality drove the country into the conflict. He expressed shame that his nation had allowed this to happen and that the government had failed to step in. He continued by questioning how, in a country where 90% of the population is baptized in a Christian tradition, could such a conflict occur. De Roux posed the question: what is the place of forgiveness and serious love so that people are able to accept the difference in others? This question arose from seeing neighbors turn on each other and the guerillas who were supposed to be protectors but instead produced abominable situations.

De Roux also highlighted the role of weapons in this conflict and placed culpability on the United States for its role in fomenting this problem. He described how the US exports the majority of the world’s weapons, including providing half of the guns in Latin America, primarily through the black market. This highlights the interconnection between countries that can potentially have devastating consequences.

In light of his many questions about the conflict and its violence, de Roux emphasized the need for transparency and honesty when approaching a truth commission. He described how powerful institutions often oppose truth in an attempt to maintain their reputations and any wrongdoings they may have committed. Yet, in the case of the Church, de Roux urged that it must admit both wrongdoings and progress in order to set an example for other institutions and be transparent on all fronts. While confronting those with power is challenging, it is vital to finding the truth.

De Roux ended his talk with a reminder that if you are to start a truth commission, you must comfort yourself and take care of your wellbeing. He emphasized that war is always devastating, and we often fail to take care of people in the way that we should. The process of finding the truth is difficult, yet de Roux’s work fighting for human rights is a sign of hope for what may be a way forward.

The Center also co-sponsored an Irish Studies-sponsored panel event “Transitional Justice, A Comparative Perspective” on April 12. The interdisciplinary panel featured speakers Cheryl Lawther (Queen’s University Belfast), Zinaida Miller (Northeastern University), Francisco de Roux, S.J. (chair of Colombia’s Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition), and the Center’s own co-director, Brinton Lykes.

CHRIJ alumnus John Carter: Discernment, Interdisciplinary Teaching, Leadership and Justice

Boston College alumnus and [CHRIJ Certificate](#) recipient, John Carter ('17), is currently a visiting assistant professor of law and divinity at the [Wake Forest Program for Leadership and Character](#). Carter has worked as an attorney, an ordained minister, and a professor, in pursuit of a theoretical lens on an actionable life. Carter's impressive list of degrees includes a JD, an MDiv, a ThM, and a Boston College PhD in Theology. However, he jokes "resiliency is the virtue that no one wants," and suggests that he took "the long way around the block." He now prioritizes acting and adapting rather than being overly analytical. Among his life mottos is that "we have to make choices in life based on less than complete information." He seeks to choose, act, and reflect on new information, and to be adaptable.

Each career change for Carter has represented "a failure of sorts in the life that [he] thought might work out." But he views vocational discernment as guided by humility, hope, and faith—calling hope "one of the hardest virtues." Carter praised the CHRIJ certificate program as incredibly valuable in teaching him the inherent value of interdisciplinary and international exposure while offering different perspectives and directions. It helped him "develop interests to be carried out in other settings" and to value the process of scholarship.

As a professor, Carter finds the personal relationships with students invaluable and enriching. As a scholar, he values a "theoretical lens to shape our action" that helps us recognize how integrated our approach to human relationships and the world is and should be. At the aforementioned Program for Leadership and Character (which offers leadership and character-relevant courses, programs, and development across Wake's graduate level schools and programs), Carter recently participated in a three-day workshop to help faculty consider virtue-centered pedagogical goals across many disciplines. Trained as a virtue ethicist at Boston College, Carter also brings this approach to his position as a professor in both the School of Law and the School of Divinity. He seeks a balance between his two disciplines, as he highlights the importance of respectful discourse today. Believing that we live in a state of "culture wars fueled by politics," Carter suggests that we must have "respect for diversity and honesty," as we seek "the why of people's beliefs and behaviors." His faith and legal training are



John Carter

indisputably intertwined: he believes that one must embrace moral beliefs to motivate public action and he views human rights in this way. He is working on a project in religious ethics that connects a functionalist approach to biblical narratives and the discourse around the [1619 Project](#).

Carter has kept an open mind and embraced growth and vocational shifts through most of his career, finding the strength to do so through his humility, hope, and faith. He has been active in his parish communities and was an ordained minister in the American Baptist tradition. He identifies the CHRIJ and its certificate program as one of the many sources of his networks and development, particularly the connections he developed with theology professor David Hollenbach, SJ and law professor Daniel Kanstroom. His time with BC's CHRIJ and the BC Theology Department exposed him to a "wealth of backgrounds and experiences," impressing in him the importance of the global reach of Catholic theological ethics. Carter expressed that his time with the CHRIJ helped him to develop interests in other settings, and he advises current students that a basic interest in human rights can be applied to one's work in many settings. His multifaceted career demonstrates, in word and action, that it is "good to have more ideas [and interests] than time, because it makes you pick the most important ideas," and that, when we have compassion for ourselves and our ever-changing life trajectory, we will find ourselves exactly where we are meant to be.

Student Awards



Charelús (R) with Center co-director
Brinton Lykes (L)

CERTIFICATE IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

Congratulations to **Sudzer Charelús, SJ** (S.T.L. '23, School of Theology and Ministry) who earned the Center's Certificate in Human Rights and International Justice this past year. We wish him all the best for his future endeavors.

SUMMER RESEARCH GRANTS

The Center is pleased to announce the recipients of its 2023 summer research grants, who will present their research findings on campus during AY23-24. The following are the recipients and their topics of study:

Owen Fletcher

International Studies, MCAS '25

"Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Era of Nayib Bukele"

Oladoyin Okunoren

PhD candidate in Social Work, SSW

"Psychosocial Consequences of the 2014-16 Ebola Containment Measures"

Asuka Ichikawa

PhD candidate in Higher Education, LSEHD

"The Role of Love in International Student Migration: Feminist Critical Policy Analysis of the Immigration Policy for F-2 Spousal Visa in the United States"

KELSEY RENNEBOHM MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP

This year is the eleventh annual award of the Kelsey Rennebohm Memorial Fellowship, to honor the memory of Kelsey Rennebohm, a student in the Lynch School of Education and Human Development who passed away suddenly in 2012. To reflect Kelsey's passions, the award goes to a student whose proposed research or activist scholarship is at the interface of psychology, mental health, gender, social justice, and human rights. This year's recipient and topic of study are:

Barbara Kozee

PhD candidate in Theology, MCAS

"Moral Agency as Grassroots Human Rights Discourse in the Israeli Palestinian Conflict"

People

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We are also grateful to the staff of the BC Center for Centers for their vital support throughout the year, in particular to Kim Driscoll, Susan Dunn, and Gaurie Pandey.

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