

# G-18 BRIEFING

KAHANE OXY-AT-THE-UN NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2020

SAY HELLO TO THE G-18!



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## STARTING OUT & GETTING GOING...

Each fall, roughly 18 Oxy seniors come to New York to participate in the Kahane-Oxy-at-the-UN program. They work full-time internships within the United Nations agencies and government missions, while also juggling courses on human rights and conflict prevention at the UN. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's program has been taking place in a remote setting, but continues to be full of fascination, challenges, and successes. By now, many of us students have settled in to our internship placements, after working hard preparing for, and then covering, the UN General Assembly High Level Week. Now we've gotten used to pulling out the (figurative and literal) popcorn for the ever riveting debates of the Security Council on UN WebTV while also getting on with daily tasks.

## MEET THE NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR, PROF. CYNTHIA ROTHSCHILD



I'm so delighted to be joining Oxy as the new Director of the Kahane Oxy-at-the-UN Program! The semester is off to a roaring start - even with the disappointment of students not being able to be physically present in New York. We are all adjusting and being resilient. And now I'm three months into this position and I can really see why the students and the program have the (great) reputation they do! I've inherited an outstanding project.

I'm excited about guiding the Oxy-at-the-UN Program toward a deeper focus on human rights, both in student coursework and in their internships. We're living in such a tough moment for multilateralism and for the valuing of human rights of all people. Any daily scan of a newspaper reveals a global climate in which governments don't really want to collaborate, discrimination is rampant, violence goes unpunished and too many people are struggling in poverty. And, of course, other crises - such as pandemics, climate change, failures in policing, and big picture challenges to democratic processes - are also omnipresent.

Here's another set of challenges: the UN is facing unprecedented financial crises, with many governments, including the US administration, looking to weaken UN agencies' effectiveness by cutting funding and otherwise challenging their credibility. Governments in all parts of the world are also undermining the human rights system itself.

So, in coming years - and right now - we need "all hands on deck" to address these contexts that are shaping our lives. Oxy's UN Program prepares students to do exactly that. It lays groundwork for students to be better prepared to understand and shape policy. It also prepares them to maneuver within the UN system, to push at its boundaries when necessary and to guide those systems and its agencies toward justice.

My interest is in expanding the pools of people who can work effectively in those deeply bureaucratic spaces -- in order to further social change. That's really the goal: making the UN and the governments within it be smarter, bolder and more sensitive to today's realities, including the demands of social movements across the globe.

# ABOUT ROTHCHILD:

I've been engaged in different kinds of UN work for many years, primarily through "civil society" / non-governmental organizations (NGOs) / activist entry points. Overall, I've been lucky to do a few decades of work at the intersections of advocacy and human rights. I've spent a long time aiming to "demystify" the UN generally for young(er) people and human rights defenders – to build a bridge between the "real world" and some of the intricacies of the UN human rights system and how governments and activists work within it. I'm excited to bring that experience to Oxy!

My focus areas include human rights generally, with a focus in gender, women's human rights and sexuality. In more recent years, I've explored global clampdowns on "civil society" and advocacy, and conservative extremist attacks against the UN and human rights systems.

I've followed and contributed to infrastructural and UN reform issues, including the creation of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and UN Women.

Much of my UN advocacy has taken place at the Council (I've attended sessions, engaged in policy work and run trainings for activists since its inception in 2006) and at the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (don't ask how many I've been involved in, but suffice it to say I've done policy and advocacy work there since the late 1990s!).

I'm currently a member of two UN Women advisory groups - one that focuses on Women Human Rights Defenders and the other on Beijing +25. I've consulted with UNIFEM (UN Women's predecessor) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). At OHCHR, I made significant contributions to the UN system's groundbreaking reporting on human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

My passion, though,  
has been in the  
decades of work  
I've done with  
many NGOs, both  
inside and outside  
the US.





## SOME LAST NOTES

I'm a trainer and facilitator, and I've written on human rights and sexual rights issues for many years, as well as on religious extremism, experiences of women human rights defenders and on HIV & AIDS.

Publications include *Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women's Organizing* and "Sex at Dusk and the Mourning After: Sexuality Policy in the US in the Years of Obama." I've made significant contributions to networks that I adore: the Women Human Rights Defenders

International Coalition and the Observatory on the Universality of Human Rights. I'm a current Board member of Synergia Initiatives for Human Rights, and I've been on the Boards of Amnesty International USA and the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice.

I'm thrilled to be part of the Oxy East Coast Outpost (which basically means I am based in New York City) and working with Prof. Jacques Fomerand (he's based in New Jersey, and is a fount of knowledge). He, the amazing staff of the International Programs Office, the brilliant faculty of the Diplomacy and World Affairs department and the wise former Director Doug Gardner have been such enthusiastic and skilled mentors. I'm grateful to them - and the Fall 2020 UN Program student group - for helping to make my first few months at Oxy entirely compelling!

*Cynthia has an MA in International Affairs and a Masters in Public Health from Columbia University. She is a graduate of Tufts University.*



# MEET SOME MEMBERS OF THE OXY-UN COHORT



## NINA SRDIĆ HADŽI-NEŠIĆ, UN FOUNDATION

Hi! My name is Nina Srđić Hadži-Nešić and my majors are Theater and Diplomacy & World Affairs. In my first weeks of interning for the United Nations Foundation (UNF), I've mostly been monitoring meetings on the sustainable global post-COVID economic recovery, including the high-level meeting of more than 45 Ministers of Finance on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Other interesting meetings I've covered relate to reimagining tourism in SIDS (Small Island Developing States), organizing the 2021 Food Systems Summit, and reforming food systems towards sustainability and zero hunger. Given the broad range of things the UNF is working on, I am really excited about further experiences this fall will bring!



## TREVOR MAIRS, UNDP

I am currently interning at UNDP's HIV, Health and Development (HHD) team. In my first week, I've started working on legal and political support systems for people living with HIV around the world. During my various Zoom calls with UN personnel, I've been impressed by the engagement of my colleagues and inspired by their ability to stay connected to the populations that they are serving throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm excited to see what the HHD team is able to accomplish this fall. I hope that after my internship, I can continue to engage with work that examines the intersection of identity and healthcare.



## ZOOBIA JILANI, UNITAR

My name is Zoobia and I am interning at the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). I assist the office with the trainings they hold for various incoming country delegations, taking notes and writing summaries of different meetings. Additionally, I am working on a long-term project creating an online training course on Security Council guidelines for delegates to use.



## ZACH GOODWIN, UNHCR

Hello! My name is Zach Goodwin. I'm a senior Diplomacy & World Affairs major and History minor currently interning with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. In my first few weeks, I've mostly been monitoring Security Council briefings and deliberations. So far I've covered meetings related to UN peacekeeping operations, attacks on schools in the Sahel, and the South Sudanese humanitarian crisis. As we move into the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly, I am interested to see how much or how little member states pay attention to global refugee crises and their accelerating causes, such as climate change and economic inequality.



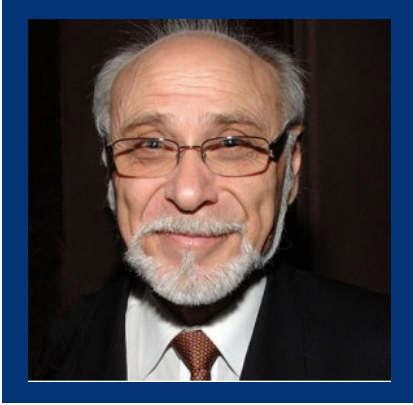
## ELLIE FARRIN, COSTA RICA MISSION

Hello all! I'm Ellie Farrin. I am interning at the Costa Rica mission, working for the minister counselor of the First Committee on Disarmament. So far, it's been a blast! My work this semester will mainly focus on killer robots, space security, and cybercrime. I've been attending small meetings with my supervisor about the upcoming ICC elections, and I've also been to some really cool discussions on killer robots. I even got to meet Costa Rica's Ambassador to the UN over zoom the other day! When I'm not in meetings, I spend most of my time researching and writing informational reports. I hope that the rest of my time at the mission will be as fruitful as my first three weeks.



## ADELAIDE WILLIS, UNFPA


Hello! I'm Adelaide Willis and I'm interning at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA is an agency that is focused on reproductive justice, gender and human rights, and country/global population data. I'm in the research division, and right now I've started my main project of researching the impact of climate change on family planning mechanisms. My impressions so far have been all positive! My department seems to be fairly close-knit, so I hope that I can get to know everyone pretty well over the course of the semester. I want to learn more about reproductive justice, especially how it intersects with race and disability. I have high hopes for the semester, and I'm looking forward to diving in more deeply as time goes by.



## **LAST BUT NOT LEAST, A MESSAGE FROM ASST. DIRECTOR, PROF. JACQUES FOMERAND**

**No New York! No 92Y! No Secretariat? No Conference rooms!  
No Delegate lounge! And.... no class room in the Church  
building....Hmm.... Rather unusual 2020 OXY program at the UN....!!!**

I spent a considerable amount of time throughout the summer wondering what a “remote” teaching situation would be....Well! We have now have entered our third week and things started “en trombe.” Many of my anxieties have evaporated. I even have those pangs that I have had in past years telling myself “they really have great questions!” “why did I forget to mention this or that...” By the end of the day, this reminded me that the test of good liberal arts college classes is not simply the classes themselves but also, and above all, the ensuing “ruminating” which they trigger among students and instructors. My hope, for all members of this year cohort (not sure I really like this term which comes from the Roman legions), now that they have overcome their initial anxieties, is that they will go through each week of pondering by themselves and among them, about what was said, debated and argued. My other hope is that, they will have similarly enriched themselves in their human rights class and their internships. And, after duly sacrificing to the gods of knowledge and wisdom, from time to time, we should celebrate and set aside your torments. I gather that it is possible to organize parties remotely....Bon semestre!!!

**Thanks for Reading! Don't forget to follow  
us on Instagram  @OxyattheUN**

### **Coming Soon:**

The next issue will describe more of the program and the courses we're taking and will continue to introduce the students in our group!

