



# RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

*CASE STUDIES IN HOPE AND STRESS*

*Symposium  
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 Pulitzer Center

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past three years, the Pulitzer Center has commissioned multiple reporting projects on the theme of religion and public policy, working in partnership with major media outlets and with leading universities. The *Religion and Power Gateway* presents Pulitzer Center reporting on these themes from throughout the world—from the explosive growth of mega churches in Africa and Latin America to intra-Islam schisms of the Middle East, to the self-immolation of Tibetan Buddhist monks and Buddhist soldiers running roughshod over the rights of Burmese Muslims, to the struggles of faith groups everywhere to come to terms with human sexuality.

This work was made possible in part through the support of the Henry Luce Foundation in a grant that

encouraged the Pulitzer Center to forge partnerships with academic specialists and institutions so as to raise the level of its journalism and extend its reach. The Center has worked in tandem with Washington University in St. Louis, American University, Yale University, the University of Chicago, the University of Southern California and the Communication University of China. It has presented joint journalism/academic symposia in Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, New Haven and Beijing.

The daylong conference at Washington University in St. Louis marks the capstone of this initiative and we hope the launchpad for work to come.



# INDEX

## Opening Remarks

- Jon Sawyer, Executive Director, Pulitzer Center
- John Bowen, Washington University

## Panel I: Religion and Environment

Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment helped shift public opinion—and policy—in the lead-up to the historic climate-change agreement in Paris. Religious and cultural influences are a factor in China's growing environmental awareness and an emerging theme in inter-faith dialogues on environment in the U.S. and Europe.

Panelists:

- Liu Jianqiang, environmental journalist and Buddhist, China Dialogue
- Jon Sawyer, executive director, Pulitzer Center
- Justin Catanoso, associate professor, Journalism, Wake Forest University

Moderator: Tim Townsend, author of *Mission at Nuremberg*; former religion reporter, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

## Panel II: Religion and Reproductive Rights

How faith shapes public policy—an examination of how religious belief and tradition play a critical role in defining evolving attitudes toward family planning, reproductive health and the global hot-button issue of abortion. Case studies from Africa, Southeast Asia and the United States.

Panelists:

- Cynthia Gorney, National Geographic, author of *Articles of Faith*
- Tom Hundley, senior editor, Pulitzer Center
- Lauren Herzog, World Faiths Development Dialogue, Berkley Center, Georgetown University
- Laura Bassett, *Huffington Post*

Moderator: Tim Townsend

## Luncheon Talk

Introduction: Holden Thorp, provost

Speaker: Marie Griffith, director, John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics

## Panel III: Assimilation or Confrontation? The Muslim Experience in Europe, the United States, and Beyond

The radicalized minority and the trickle of recruits to jihadist groups dominate the headlines, but the mainstream of Islam in the United States and Europe is seeking ways to adjust and accommodate itself to societies in which it is not the dominant faith.

Panelists:

- John Bowen, Washington University
- Geneive Abdo, non-resident fellow, Brookings Institution
- Sherria Ayuandini, Washington University
- Nick Street, University of Southern California
- Maryam Kashani, Danforth Center on Religion and Politics, Washington University

Moderator: Tom Hundley, senior editor, Pulitzer Center

## Panel IV: Global Issues, Local Debate

Politicians are calling for the exclusion of Muslim immigrants. Climate-change denial remains for many a touchstone of religious faith. Abortion clinics are the focus of bitter, sometimes violent, protest. In a time of polarization and anger, can religious faith be a force for positive dialogue and political consensus?

Panelists:

- Shaun Casey, special representative, Religion and Global Affairs, State Department
- Marie Griffith, Danforth Center on Religion and Politics, Washington University
- Don Belt, University of Richmond, Out of Eden Walk Project
- Ann Peters, Campus Consortium director, Pulitzer Center

Moderator: Kem Knapp Sawyer, contributing editor, Pulitzer Center

## Closing Remarks

- Jon Sawyer, Pulitzer Center
- John Bowen, Washington University

## Public Forum

Welcome: James Wertsch, Vice Chancellor, Washington University

Speaker: Shaun Casey, Special Representative, Religion and Global Affairs, State Department

Title: *What's Religion Got To Do With Foreign Policy?*

# OPENING REMARKS

Jon Sawyer  
Executive Director, Pulitzer Center

Good morning. I want to thank you all for being here—and especially anthropologist John Bowen and his colleagues from Washington University for co-sponsoring this event.

Over the past three years, the Pulitzer Center has commissioned multiple reporting projects on the theme of religion and public policy, working in partnership with major media outlets and leading universities. If you go on our website, the *Religion and Power* gateway (you'll see it on the homepage) presents the reporting on these themes from throughout the world: From the explosive growth of mega church Pentecostalism in South America and Africa to the intra-Islam schisms of the Middle East, from the self-immolation of Tibet and Buddhist monks protesting Chinese rule to Buddhist soldiers running roughshod over the rights of Burmese Muslims, to the struggle of faith groups everywhere to come to terms with human sexuality.

All this work is made possible, in part, through the support of the Henry Luce Foundation. We're very pleased that Toby Volkman of Luce is with us today. The grant encouraged the Pulitzer Center to forge partnerships with academic specialists within institutions with the aim of raising the level of our journalism and extending its reach.

The Center has worked in tandem with Washington University in St. Louis, American University, Yale University's Schools of Divinity and of Forestry and Environmental Studies, the University of Southern California, the Communication University of China, Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines, and the graduate school of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta. We've presented joint academic-journalist symposia in Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, New Haven, and Beijing.

The daylong conference here at Washington University today marks the capstone of this initiative and we hope the launchpad for work to come. We're recording the presentations and discussion, and hope to produce an edited transcript in print and online that we can share beyond this room. And, of course, we're grateful to all of you, panelists and audience, for taking the time to be with us to explore these issues that affect us all.

Religion and public policy is a subject that is rarely addressed directly in the media and yet it's all around us. Some examples are obvious: The twisted view of Islam by ISIS and the beheading of alleged apostates, or Donald Trump's call—wholly unconstitutional—for a religious test for visitors to the United States. But there are many other instances close to home, including just last week *The New York Times* account of how 19th century leaders of Georgetown University staved off financial collapse by selling 238 slaves and breaking up their families. What is the appropriate response to that today—by Georgetown,

by Catholics, by people of other religious traditions, by the U.S. government?

Today's gathering is an opportunity to discuss in depth a broad cross section of these issues with the journalists and the academic specialists who have helped us address these topics across the globe. In a moment, we'll turn to the first panel on religion and environment, but first I want to welcome John Bowen, our partner in this initiative and a distinguished anthropologist here at Washington University.

John Bowen  
Department of Anthropology, Washington University

It's a great honor to help open this workshop symposium, which does bring together a number of years of work, which many people Jon just mentioned were able to do thanks to the support of the Luce Foundation and it's doubly pleasurable because we've got a homecoming here. The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting is in Washington, D.C. but never forgets its longstanding ties to Washington University in St. Louis.

Our students, our undergraduates and our graduates, benefited enormously from that tie. Ann Peters, the director of Pulitzer's Campus Consortium, has been a key person in keeping this going. So has Pulitzer's Senior Editor Tom Hundley, who has also been really great in encouraging some of our grad students to do work on Muslims in Europe, using the reporting and writing skills of seasoned journalists (of which he is one) in helping them craft the sort of stories that will receive placement in major publications. He's engaged on that right now with us. We're really grateful at Washington University.

In the Anthropology Department we've had a particularly strong collaboration with Tom and with Jon in making this kind of work possible. Today it's not enough for students, especially in a field like anthropology which is dealing with these issues of religion and public policy and the environment and so many others, to just write academic treatises. We need to get the word out. We find out stuff. We're like journalists. We have longer deadlines. That's the main difference. But we get out, we see stuff, and it's important that we know how to write about that stuff in a way that it can reach broader publics. That's what the Pulitzer Center helps us do.

Secondly, I'm especially happy to be doing this because Toby Volkman is with us. Toby and I go back to 1982 in Boston and we've kept in touch over the years and it's great to have old friends visiting. Toby, in her work at Luce and before that at other foundations, has been really important in helping scholars get the word out.

# Panel 1: Environment and Religion

Moderator: Tim Townsend

Author of *Mission to Nuremberg*; former religion reporter, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*



My name is Tim Townsend. I'm a Washington, D.C.-based editor at [timeline.com](https://www.timeline.com), which is a San Francisco media startup that uses history to bring context to the news. I've previously worked at the Pew Research Center for a project on religion and public life. Before that I was here in St. Louis as the religion reporter at the *Post-Dispatch*. A highlight of that was overlapping with Jon Sawyer when he was on the way out and I was on the way in. He was the D.C. bureau chief and I was very lucky to have been able to work with him on a project about Muslim communities in the U.S. and abroad.

So this first panel that we are going to have today is about environmentalism, the environment and religion. I was Googling around about that and I found, I guess, a very famous essay called "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" that was written by Lynn White who wrote that "as we enter the last third of the 20th century, concern for the problem of ecological backlash is mounting feverishly."

This was in 1967.

"The emergence in widespread practice of the Baconian creed that scientific knowledge means technological power over nature can scarcely be dated before about 1850. Its acceptance

as a normal pattern of action may mark the greatest event in human history since the invention of agriculture. What people do about their ecology,” White wrote, “depends on what they think about themselves in relation to the things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion.

“The Judeo-Christian creation story, for one, takes place in the garden and gives man power over nature. It also says man was made in God’s image. No item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purpose,” White wrote. “Man shares in great measure God’s transcendence of nature.”

The journalists have been following religion’s sort of slow embrace of environmentalism, sometimes called creation care, by the faithful. For some Christians, a highlight of that embrace was Pope Francis’s encyclical from about a year ago, *Laudato si*, controversial among capitalists, subtitled “Care for Our Common Home.” And some of the journalists who have been covering this are here today.

Liu Jianqiang is the Beijing editor of China Dialogue, which provides analysis and discussion on environmental issues in China, and is a visiting scholar at the journalism school and school of public health at UC Berkeley. Before that he was a senior investigative reporter with the Southern Weekly, China’s most influential investigative newspaper, where he provided frontline, in-depth coverage of the burgeoning Chinese environmental movement. His book, *Tibetan Environmentalism in China: The King of Dzi*, was published in China in 2009 and was just published in the U.S. His second book, *The Last Rafting on Jinsha River*, was named China’s Best Outdoor Book in 2012. Jianqiang holds an MA in journalism from Tsinghua University and a BA in political science from the East China University of Science and Technology.

The aforementioned Jon Sawyer is the founding director of Pulitzer Center. Before that he spent three decades at *the St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporting from over five dozen countries and winning the National Press Club Prize for best international reporting three years in a row. He grew up in North Carolina and is a graduate of Yale University.

Justin Catanoso is a North Carolina-based journalist with 30 years of experience covering climate change, health care, economic development, and travel. He is a Pulitzer Prize nominee and a winner of a Science and Society Award for his coverage of fraud in the tobacco industry in the early 1990s. His current reporting on the effects of climate change, especially in the tropics, is supported by the Pulitzer Center and the Center of Energy, Environment and Sustainability at Wake Forest University. Recent work has focused on the intersection of faith and environmental protection. He is now a regular correspondent for *mongabay.com*, a leading environmental news site with an international following. He has covered UN climate summits in Lima in 2014 and Paris last year.

## Jon Sawyer Executive director, Pulitzer Center

Thank you Tim. So before we have the panelists present, we are going to show about a 12-minute excerpt from *Searching for Sacred Mountain*, which is a documentary that we produced on Liu Jianqiang’s work on China and the influence of religious tradition and other cultural traditions on approaches to the environment. We did it first as a short piece for PBS *NewsHour* and also for the *Religion and Ethics News Weekly* and then Gary Marcuse and Shi Lihong, the filmmakers, expanded that to about a 20-minute documentary. It’s on our site if you want to see the whole thing, but I hope this will give us some background on the work that we did in China. We can talk a bit more about it afterwards.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/8ffbGYgwOd8>



## Liu Jianqiang Beijing Editor, China Dialogue

As you have seen in the video, more and more Chinese environmentalists have embraced Tibetan Buddhism. I’d like to share with you my personal observations on how the Tibetan religion and culture can play an important role in the environmental movement.

Over the past 15 years, I was involved in China’s environmental movement. In my personal opinion, the movement was one of the most important social movements in China. I believed it was something that would change China.

I would like to use an infographic made by China Environment Forum, an organization in Washington D.C. From this you will see there are many dam projects in Southwest China. One of the huge and earliest projects is the Three Gorges Dam. The project was proposed more than 30 years ago and was the first huge project that common Chinese people could discuss and say “No” to after the Cultural Revolution. But the opposition was suppressed because of what happened at Tiananmen Square in 1989. A democratic movement was crushed by the government and everything changed in China.

The next case is the Salween Dam projects, which we call Nu River (“Angry River”) in China. Actually, it was the very first large dam project that Chinese people were able to temporarily stop. In an earlier era, the project might have been able to charge ahead unchallenged, but in February 2004, because of the opposition from NGOs and journalists, Premier Wen Jiabao suspended the plans, sending them back for more scientific study. If the projects had gone ahead, children would have lost their schools, and local people would have lost their land, houses, churches and lifestyle. Chinese civil society did change something.

The next case is the Tiger Leaping Gorge Dams project. In the summer of 2004, news trickled out of a plan by a hydropower company to build eight dams on the Jinsha River, the upstream reaches of the Yangtze River. The project would demolish a spectacular canyon known as Tiger Leaping Gorge.

A colleague and I published an investigative report on this. Premier Wen Jiabao read the story and stopped the project.

After that, I was invited by Professor Lu Zhi from Peking University to go to Tibet to report on a story. There, I suddenly realized that all the great rivers I just mentioned were protected by these common Tibetan people. We went there to attend the first ecology festival in the Tibetan plateau, which was held by local Tibetan environmentalists and some environmentalists from Beijing. They asked the lamas—the respected teachers among Tibetan monks—to tell local people that wearing fur clothing was not a Tibetan tradition and not beautiful and that this behavior was killing the wild animals and violating the teachings of Buddhism.

The campaign worked: more than one hundred local participants at the festival swore that they would not wear any wild-animal fur garment.

Professor Lu Zhi told me, “Because of the traditional beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism, the Tibetans protect sacred mountains and holy lakes. Here the ecology is in relatively good condition, which demonstrates the strong role that culture can play in biodiversity conservation.”

The sacred mountains and holy lakes of Tibet are the sources of the Yellow River, Yangtze River, Mekong River (Lancangjiang), Salween (Nujiang), Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo), and the Ganges and Indus Rivers, whose lower reaches nurture some three billion people.

It made me realize that China’s ecological system was protected by Tibetans and their traditional culture. Unfortunately, very few people in China, most of whom are Han Chinese, recognize and appreciate this simple fact.

The first Tibetan I met in Tibet was Tashi Dorje, who was a local hero protecting Tibetan antelopes. There are movies about the story of him and his colleagues. More than 20 years ago, he and his leader Sonam Dargye went to Kekexili, a barren wasteland in Tibet, to protect antelopes. Sonam Dargye was killed by the poachers. When I met Tashi Dorje, he told me this incredible story. That’s why I decided to quit my job and go to Tibet to write a book.

The second Tibetan person I met was Rinchen Samdrup, a herder from a small village of 2,000 people, few of whom can speak Chinese. For a long time, they lived there peacefully and happily with their Lion Mountain. The Buddha told their forefathers that the mountain was holy and the villagers’ happiness was connected with it. The sacred mountain boomed under the villagers’ protection until government came. They cut down the trees for money and hunted for enjoyment. A few years later, Lion Mountain was bald. “Just like a monk’s head,” Rinchen Samdrup said.

Every villager was sad. For the Tibetan, it was not only a problem of environment; it was also about their fate and beliefs. They wanted to do something to protect their sacred mountain and their lifestyle. But they were afraid to challenge the government face to face. Therefore, every family began to plant trees secretly until Tashi Dorje visited the village.

He encouraged the villagers. “You don’t know the current government policy,” he said. “Actually the government is encouraging people to protect the forest. Times have changed.” So the local people began planting trees and one year later the mountain was covered by trees.

And at the same time a very strange thing happened. In the past few years, wolves have attacked the sheep and cows, and it was a big loss for the families. But now wolves didn’t eat the sheep and the cows anymore. What had happened? It’s a very interesting story. They found that the number of wild animals on the mountain was increasing rapidly. The wolves had enough to eat so

the villagers’ sheep and cows were safe. Rinchen Samdrup said it looks like the Buddha has called the wolves: “They are protecting the Sacred Mountain, Don’t kill their sheep and cows anymore!”

The villagers learned from this that it’s easy to converse with nature. If you give your love, you will get love from nature. They don’t think they are protecting just the “environment.” Buddhism teaches them that mountains, trees, and wild animals are members of their family, so they should love them. That’s the Tibetan tradition.

I published an article in my newspaper and I was sure some people didn’t like the story. Most Chinese don’t like the Tibetan religion because of the government propaganda over 40, 50, even 60 years. To respect other people’s beliefs is still difficult for many Chinese. But I wanted to tell them the truth: Millions of Tibetan people are protecting the headwaters of great rivers. More than one billion Chinese have benefited from the Tibetan belief and lifestyle, but they still don’t like the Tibetans’ beliefs.

In other places, environmental protection arises out of urgent need, as a result of industrial pollution, and not out of respect for other life forms. “Our people protect the environment out of cultural tradition,” Rinchen Samdrup explained. “We do it happily without any ulterior motives. But others protect the environment—” Stretching out his hands, Rinchen Samdrup imitated squeezing dry a batch of wet clothes, “—they protect it because they’re being ‘squeezed’ by law and money.”

But, you know, that so-called economic “development” is so influential, so powerful and so unstoppable. You will see there are a lot of dam and mining projects proceeding in Tibet, which are killing rivers and sacred mountains. But more and more



Liu Jianqiang

local Tibetans, including lamas and children, are trying their best to protect their home and culture.

They are working on nature conservation beyond Tibet to the Himalaya region. Even in Ladakh, India, where many Tibetans live, the Buddhist leaders and locals are overcoming a water shortage by building ice stupas. They built the ice stupas during the winter, and H.H. the 37th Drikung Kyabgön Chetsang Rinpoche, a Buddhist leader, supported and blessed it. The locals call it an “ice stupa” because it resembles the traditional Buddhist monument. Although the ice stupa is exposed to the sun, it melts very slowly. The first ice stupa they made survived until mid May, melting away entirely when temperatures reached 30 degrees centigrade. When it melts, the locals use the water to irrigate crops.

Drikung Kyabgön Chetsang Rinpoche is promoting environmental protection around the world. I like what he said a couple of days ago in New York. “Let’s walk down the throne to work for the interests of all living beings. We protect environment not out of our religions. It’s just because our ‘house’ is collapsing and we have to do something to save our planet. It doesn’t matter what your belief is. What really matters is working for the interests of sentient beings.” The campaign worked: more than one hundred local participants at the festival swore that they would not wear any wild-animal fur garment.

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Why do I think that Tibetan culture and religion matter for China's environment? Today China is in a serious environmental crisis, which sparked most of the large cases of disorder seen in China over the last 15 years. China's urban residents (or the new "middle class") had before protested on the streets only very rarely. Discontent is expressed almost exclusively online, via angry typing. But this has changed over the last 15 years – protests have come offline and onto the streets.

Professor Lu Zhi has told me that conservation is not easy. It could be like swimming upstream, because poor areas needed economic development and conservation often involved the sacrifice of economic benefit. But after arriving in the Tibetan

region, her eyes opened. Instead of "swimming upstream," conservation could be more like "going with the flow."

There is hope for nature reserves in Tibet. Many Chinese in the past 20 years have begun learning about Tibetan culture. The more they knew, the more they felt that textbooks and media reports about Tibet were too shallow. Tibet's great contribution and value to humanity remained undiscovered. Without a deep understanding of this nationality, there would be a gulf between peoples. "With understanding comes illumination and harmony between the nationalities," Lu Zhi told me.

That's why I decided to go there again to write books to tell the people the truth.

When I studied China's environmental movement and Tibetan culture, I realized that the Tibetans were among the pioneers who started China's environmental movement. Sonam Dargye sacrificed his life to protect the Tibetan antelope, which stirred up a nationwide campaign to protect Tibet's environment. Many young Chinese volunteers went to the Tibetan Plateau to protect wild animals and environment, and they were among China's first environmental protection volunteers. In 1994, the year of Sonam Dargye's death, Friends of Nature, one of China's first environmental NGOs, was established in Beijing. Its first successful campaign was to call public attention to antelope protection and support Sonam Dargye's successors. Chinese environmental consciousness was awakened. The Kekexili Nature Reserve was subsequently established by the Chinese government.

Today Tibetan religion and culture is more and more popular in China because more and more people realize its value. It helps people like me regain strength and confidence in the face of environmental degradation and realize the importance of building a harmony between human and nature. I like what Chakme Rinpoche, a community leader and founder of a local NGO, said. "We are doing our best to achieve three harmonies: The harmony between human being and environment. The harmony among people. The harmony in our heart." I believe Tibetan religion and culture can play a key role in achieving this goal.

## Jon Sawyer Executive director, Pulitzer Center

I want to describe how we went about the China project and why I think this model of university-journalist collaboration is so important. For me, on the China story, it began three years ago at the Shaolin Temple in Henan Province, an ancient center of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism in China. It's gorgeous mountainous country, but today also among the most polluted regions in the country thanks to heavy production there of coal.

I was there at the invitation of Mary Evelyn Tucker, who has run the religion and ecology forum first at Harvard and then for the past few years at Yale, looking at the influence of major religions around the world on environmental issues. Mary Evelyn was a wonderful partner in introducing me to lots of people and expertise on this. We were at a conference for the inauguration of the International Confucian Ecological Association a similar group, based on the Taoist tradition, had begun seven or eight years earlier.



Justin Catanoso and Jon Sawyer

I made a number of contacts at the conference and that led later in the year to another trip, this time to Guangzhou for the Environmental Film Festival. In Guangzhou I met a filmmaker named Shi Lihong—the person you saw in the short video that we showed earlier. I was telling Shi Lihong what we were hoping to do, a project to show how cultural traditions and religions were influencing the approach to environmental issues in China. We were having breakfast at the conference hotel and she said, “Well, I have the person you should meet. He’s upstairs. He’s at the conference.” And that was Liu Jianqiang, who spoke just now. So we met and I heard his story, including the part about his conversion to Buddhism. He was a leading environmental investigative reporter for whom religion has had a profound influence in his own life. And as I got to know him and Lihong and some of the others, their associates, I began to see how rich this conversation was about what was happening in China.

At that same conference in Guangzhou, there was a Canadian filmmaker named Gary Marcuse, the producer of *Waking of the Green Tiger*, an environmental film. Gary is from Vancouver. He and I decided to collaborate and then we brought in Fred de Sam Lazaro from PBS NewsHour, who narrated the piece we viewed earlier.

We did the piece for PBS NewsHour, and also a longer 20-minute version, and then we arranged to do presentations of it around the country with our partners at schools and universities. Part of this was to get the story out, not just on mass media, but also in venues like this. So we showed it at the DC Environmental Film Festival a couple of years ago, we took it to Chicago and we took it to the Yale Forestry School.

But all along, what we really wanted to do, and one of the principal goals in this project, was to use this as a way to have a conversation in China—to bring together people who normally don’t get together. So we spent about two years on three or four trips to China negotiating, trying to find an academic partner who would work with us, The Pulitzer Center, and Yale (our main partner on the project) to do a conference that would bring together academics, religious leaders, government officials, journalists, business people, and have them all in one room for a day like today to talk about these issues.

We first thought we were going to do it in Nanjing and then they got the cold feet, the local partners and the Communist Party both. In China you have to have at some level the support of the Communist Party to do something like this. It took us a year

to make this work—and finally we arranged a partnership with the Communication University of China.

So we were able to do this conference at the Yale Beijing Center in June 2015 and we did have 75 or so people—among them the deputy minister of environment, one of the China’s leading Buddhist monks, Taoist experts, Confucians, about half a dozen international media people, and several of the senior environmental journalists from within China. It was a really remarkable day.

I think all of us from the outside, the non-Chinese, were really taken aback by how frank the Chinese were when talking about the extent of the problems that they faced and the pressures they were under and how they were trying to engage in this issue even under the constraints of government that was really in the midst of imposing a lot of restrictions on media activity. The environment is an interesting exception to that trend. We can talk more about this in the Q&A. Why is it an exception? Because there is so much public unrest about the kinds of images that Jianqiang just showed us. About the smog in Beijing and the food you can’t trust, the milk you can’t drink. There is actually something on the order of 55,000 protests every year in China, public protests over environmental issues. The government knows this. The government knows that they have got to address these issues if they are going to stay in power or if the Communist Party is going to stay in power.



*Ecological Civilization*, Pulitzer Center e-book on proceedings of conference at Yale Beijing Center, June 2015.  
Download: [bit.ly/EbookBlog](http://bit.ly/EbookBlog)

So at this point they also know, I think to some extent, that they need the media, particularly because China is such a huge country that you can't just impose those kinds of reforms that they need from the top down. They need the kind of information that comes from good reporting that takes place around the country. So a lot of the best reporting that you see on environmental issues in China is coming not from Western media, but from Western media picking up on what's been done by really intrepid Chinese journalists. So that Beijing conference was a chance to bring together that expertise and diverse points of view, and to get people talking with each other. And we hope that it will lead to deeper relationships and further work.

So then we continued to address this theme of religion and the environment. We had a conference on this topic at American University last September. By then the pope had issued his encyclical on the environment. There was a lot of attention paid to that, among other places at Wake Forest, another of our partner schools. Justin Catanoso, who runs the journalism program at Wake Forest and is an accomplished journalist himself, has done a lot of work in Peru and elsewhere on environmental issues and climate change and the intersection of faith and science. So we had discussions and thought that it would be really useful to do some work in Peru, where Justin has reported before, and look at how people were responding to what the pope had written. And that led to the reporting Justin did in Peru and then in Rome and then in Paris at the time of the climate change conference last December, which he'll talk about now.

So we had a conference that also looked at these other issues and broadening beyond just one country, one region, to the whole world.

So with that interlude, I will turn it over to Justin and we'll talk about this broader question. I should also note that on our website you can find an e-book that captures what happened at the Beijing conference last summer. It's called *Ecological Civilization*. It's the edited transcript from the conference and photographs from it plus links to a lot of our reporting. It's all on our site and it's free. I hope you'll take a look.

## Justin Catanoso Director of Journalism, Wake Forest University

Good morning. It really is an honor and a privilege to be here with this incredible group of journalists and scholars and talking about this really important issue. Jon called me a year ago with this idea of reporting on the intersection between faith and climate change based on the work Pulitzer Center has funded. He knew I went to Peru a year or two prior, but he also knew that I was going to be in Rome last summer with students and I got a 1-day press pass in the Vatican to cover the release of the *Laudato si*, which was quite an event.

Before I talk about the reporting I did in Peru, I want to read to you one of my favorite passages Pope Francis writes from *Laudato si*. It speaks to his emphasis. The whole idea behind this encyclical is how do we tie environmental degradation to its impact on the poor—because the poor are the ones that are suffering the most from all of this. So this entire document is rife with examples of how our most impoverished nations are being devastated by economic growth in the first world and we see that everywhere. We plunder these third-world countries for the natural resources which come to the United States, which

we then burn, use in some way, and we fill the air with carbon dioxide and we hope they don't cut their trees down because we need their trees as carbon sinks, so we can breathe in that space. And all they want to do is develop. So it's a real conundrum.

This is what the pope says in section 32 of *Laudato si*:

“The earth's resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses.

“Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.”

It's a powerful statement and I took that with me to Peru as I interviewed government officials and business leaders and church leaders, regular folks, miners, and farmers. And I came to two regions of Peru, one of them among the most hotly contested environmental conflicts in the country—in southern Peru just above Chile, in a little town called Cocachacra.

And then I went back a couple of weeks later up into the Andes, up 14,000 feet, into a community called La Oroya. La Oroya has had a smelting plant there, a copper and lead smelting plant, for 77 years. It's the primary employer there. They closed that plant six years ago. That plant has devastated that town. It's melted the mountains. 77 years of acid rain will do that. It's poisoned the river; it's poisoned the ground. You can't do anything there. And I heard that there were protests in La Oroya the week before I got there. And I'd interviewed the archbishop in that region and he's all about *Laudato si* and I just assumed that the people of La Oroya were with the bishop because there's this big push to sell this smelting plant and get it open again. The American company that owned it, Doe Run, closed it in 2009 because Peru suddenly was gaining some environmental consciousness and it raised its environmental standards. And that company basically looked at this and because it would reduce their profit margins by some slight amount they shut the plant down, threw 1,600 people out of work, and devastated the community of 33,000 people.



The only person who was opposing the push to reopen this plant, not only to reopen it but to lower the environmental standards back to where they were before it closed, was the archbishop. Everybody else there wanted that plant to reopen because it was the only thing they knew how to do.

When I got to this town, I was astonished to talk to the folks there.

Now keep in mind, Peru is a Catholic country. 75 percent, 3 out of 4 people, are Catholic there. The rest are indigenous Indians. The amount of mining in that country is extraordinary. It counts for 60 percent of that country's exports. Because of the rise in commodities, prices over the last 15 years, the mining industry has exploded. They issue somewhere on the order of 500 new mining permits per year. So it's not a coincidence that Peru's poverty rate went from 50 percent to 26 percent within those 15 years.

So you have this conundrum where the economic vitality of the community depends on the very thing that the pope is talking about going back on: environmental degradation. And I spoke with these amazing people who worked in this plant and told me about the diseases that they have. The fact that every child in that town has lead poisoning 8 times higher than the World Health Organization says is viable for health. About how they have friends who died from diseases they got working in that plant. How they love this pope who has 82 percent approval ratings across Peru.

But when I told them about *Laudato si*, they didn't know very much about it. 90 percent of Peruvian press is owned by one family and it's pure business. They didn't really cover *Laudato si* when it came out, but there were some editorials about it saying it was a joke. What does the pope know about business, they wrote. What does the pope know about economics? He should mind his own business. He should stick to his knitting. He should stick to theology.

Well, there's actually a lot of theology in this. It's an incredible document. 180 pages of beautifully argued environmental hope. But these people weren't seeing it. I had left the Vatican with six pages of summaries of *Laudato si* in a variety of languages and I made 50 copies of the one in Spanish and handed in out to people. In La Oroya they would read through it and they would say "We love this pope. He has a right to say this, but there is nothing that he can say that is more important than that plant opening." You know, the plant was devastating their way of life. It was devastating their health. It was devastating their community. But they have no other options. It's not like there's a community college there for which they can get trained and do other jobs. And this one guy said to me, "We're poor because they closed that plant. If that plant were open we wouldn't be poor. So the pope needs to just mind his own business."

Okay, we all know how popular this pope is. We all know the incredible influence that he has. What I was seeing in my reporting in La Oroya was sort of the limits of his moral authority with the very people he staked his entire legacy on, right? The poor. They're the ones saying, "This is what we do and we're proud of it." This smelting plant is right in the middle of town. It's so popular and is such a part of the culture that on the town seal there is a symbol of the plant itself with three smoke stacks belching poison into the air. Incredible.

I teach in Winston Salem, North Carolina, which is the home of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco. When I moved there in 1987, Reynolds Tobacco employed 16,000 people. And, of course, it makes cigarettes that kill about 300,000 people a year and there were signs all over town that said "Pride in Tobacco." And I thought about Winston, the town that I lived in, and the choices the people make in the jobs that they take. Think about Kentucky, West Virginia and the coal miners and how they put themselves at risk and their health at risk and the environmental degradation that's taking place all across West Virginia with strip mining and mountaintop mining. It's not different in Peru except they don't have choices there.

Now La Oroya is considered one of the most polluted cities on earth. It makes the top 10 list and guess what other city is on that list? Chernobyl. And yet they want that plant to reopen. But that was only part of my reporting because, I don't know, you cover climate change and it's a pretty grim topic. All the numbers are against us. There is so much damage that's baked into the system, but I don't know that we have any choice as a species than to be optimistic.

***There is so much damage that's baked into the system, but I don't know that we have any choice as a species than to be optimistic.***

What I discovered in Paris is that there's a window that's closing. The Paris Agreement is phenomenal. It's the first time 195 nations agreed to reduce their carbon footprint. Actually, to even have five nations do it aggressively would be fine. But 195 agreed to do it. There's hope in Paris that people found extraordinary.

So I'm going to talk about this last story before we get to the discussion part. I went to Southern Peru, to Cocachacra. It's a city of about 55,000 people. It's in the middle of the desert. It's so dry, so arid. It doesn't rain a drop there. It doesn't look like the moon; it looks like Mars. But they have a glacier-fed river that comes right down this valley. It's called the Tambo River and with that river and with whatever groundwater they have, they've got this fertile valley that supports 15,000 families and has for over 200 years. Nobody has a lot that's more than 20 acres. It's pretty much subsistence farming. I met with Minister of Environment Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, who was the head of COP20 in Lima. He approved a permit, the very first mining permit ever in southern Peru, in this farming region, and he gave it to this Mexican company that has one of the worst environmental records you can imagine. It took them two or three tries to get the environmental impact study passed. And they approved this site right next to the river, right next to the fertile valley.

The mayor of the community drove me out to where the site is. I think I was the second journalist who had been there. Local journalists hadn't been there. I was the second journalist to ever see it. So I'm looking this way and I can see this big expanse of desert where they're going to dig three-quarters of a mile across, 1,300 feet deep, an open pit copper mine and they're going to extract copper for 18 years. It's a \$1.4 billion project and they're going to pull hundreds of millions of dollars of copper out of there.

Then if you turn around—literally, just turn around 180 degrees—and there in the other direction there is the river and there's the farm valley. And the minister of the environment has the audacity to tell me that these two things can coexist. The silver oxide will come out of the copper mine, will land on these plants and it'll kill everything. When it gets into the soil, it makes

the soil infertile. When it gets in the water, it kills the water. We know that. That's what happened in La Oroya. But these are the choices that Peru is making because it's a country that wants to develop. They're second-world and they want to get to be first-world or at least close to it. So they're going into these areas where there's never been mining before and they say, "Look at all the taxes we'll pull out." And they're right. They're right. But that place is going to create like, I don't know, 600 jobs against 15,000 farm families.

Well, Peru also has this thing where you have to agree as a community to allow a project to go forward. So the farm community has been fighting this project for six years and they've held it up for six years. It's incredible. I met the leader of the farm opposition. His name is Jose Cornejo. I don't know that I've ever been in the presence of someone with so much charisma, maybe with the exception of Bruce Springsteen when I saw him the first time in 1984. Like that kind of electricity. He was a farmer, he had dirt under his fingernails. I thought he was a blue-collar guy. And he sat down and he talked to me through his interpreter and he said, "We're sort of running out of steam here. We're under martial law right now. Four of my best friends have been killed in the protests because the government has taken sides with the mining company and I've been arrested three times for that cause and held in jail for several nights simply for trying to protect our livelihoods here. We do not need a copper mine in Cocachacra." And I asked him if he knew anything about the encyclical and he said "Nope." So I handed him the six-page summary in Spanish and he read it and he said, "This is incredible. We're up against big forces and the pope is with us and we're not going to quit. We'll keep fighting."

So I got the sense and was able to write these stories about this dichotomy between the pope's moral influence on this issue of environmental degradation and how it really depends on where your economic bread is buttered. Right? So if you're in the mining industry and your job is to tear down rain forests to get the gold that's underneath, then you really don't care about the pope even if you go to church every Sunday. And if you were mining for silver or copper or lead, all of which are going to first-world countries, primarily the United States, you make a living. You have a job. You send your kids to school. You don't care what the pope says even if you're a devout Catholic.

But if you're in Cocachacra, you love this guy. You hope that he's got your back. And what's happening now is, and I met these folks in Rome. I've actually spent a lot of time with the cardinal who was in charge of writing *Laudato si* and the goal is to develop curriculum for every diocese in the world. And that will spread out to get into Catholic education, Catholic schools, as a way of making sure this document takes hold and that Catholics are a big part of the solution.

I'll wrap it up there but I want to leave you with this one thought. As influential as this pope is and as revered as he is, he's got his hands full trying to fight climate change and defending the poor because sometimes the poor don't want to be defended. Thank you.

### **Tim Townsend:**

I will claim moderator's prerogative and ask the first question.

I'm curious about that archbishop that Justin talked about. He obviously has a gigantic hurdle in front of him. You know, his boss has just told him, "Here's the document. Good luck." And that archbishop, you know, in his archdiocese, he's the one who has to be the catechist. He's got to go out and teach these people that this is a real message from a real pope from a real Rome. So were you able to talk to him about, you know, once you had gone out and talked to the Catholics who were really living this on the ground, were you able to ask him, "How do you do what you have to do?"

### **Justin Catanoso:**

This is a guy who gets death threats on a regular basis—from the industry, primarily. And he doesn't live in La Oroya, which is where the smelting plant is, so he's less in touch with the people and more in touch with this general idea of fighting this idea. And he is absolutely committed to environmental protection and has been for years. He's been fighting this smelting plant long before the pope got involved. And the people of La Oroya are saying, "Well, he doesn't even live here. He doesn't represent our thoughts. He doesn't represent our points of view."

One of the things I did in Cocachacra was I went to see the local priest there. And this is a young guy and I was the last person that he wanted to see when I showed up at his door with an interpreter. And he wanted nothing to do with this. He was seeing clashes outside his church and people being shot and he said, "I just want peace. I just want both sides to get along." And I said with all due respect, and I read him a passage from *Laudato si* that said priests need to take sides. They need to stand up for the poor and stand up for the environment. Your boss is telling you to do something. He said something like, "You know, I'm really good at weddings. I'm really good at baptisms. Funerals, awesome. I didn't buy into this. You know, I'm just a little country priest. I'm not an advocate." Essentially what he was saying is "I'm not that courageous." And right now nobody's absolutely told him what to do, but in three weeks he was being called to Arequipa, which is the big city here about two hours away, where they were going to get trained on *Laudato si*. And I suspect if I were to go back now, he would be picking sides and he would have something more to say in defense of the farmers in that region.

### **Audience question:**

Justin, I'm really interested in the first town, La Oroya, the smelting town. Somewhere in this clash, is there a side, either in Peru or internationally, that is presenting an alternative way? For example, a smelting mine can reopen with environmental protections that would greatly lower the damage.

### **Justin Catanoso:**

All that's possible and there is talk about that. We actually do it in the United States. We do smelting in the United States at a far lower pollution level than they do in these other countries. It's just expensive and it cuts into profit margins.

I don't know if that's the answer. I just got back from Peru. What they're talking about is we need to bring other opportunities. That's a community that needs a community college. It needs to be able to train these people to do other things like build solar

panels and wind turbines and insulate buildings. Nobody has any heat. I stayed at a hotel for two nights. It was at 14,000 feet, 30 degrees every night, and there's no heat anywhere—so you sleep under 27 blankets. That hasn't come yet, but there's talk about that. There's talk about how do we change the economy in some of these places so they have other things to do. But actually making some of these processes more environmentally friendly? Not yet.

**Audience question:**

What kind of Buddhist is Jianqiang?

**Liu Jianqiang:**

I'm Tibetan Buddhist.

**Audience question:**

Do Taoism and Confucianism and other older Chinese philosophies and religions deserve some credit or more credit than Tibetan Buddhism in terms of addressing environmental issues?

**Liu Jianqiang:**

Thanks very much. I actually didn't give a whole picture of China's religious philosophy. That's true. Jon just mentioned Chinese Confucianism and Taoism and it's true, they are very important values for Chinese. I'm not a scholar. I don't have the ability to compare different philosophies. What I saw in China is that we have a very long tradition of harmony between humans and nature. But over my career in the past 12 years, reporting on China's environmental movement, I didn't find any people, any NGOs, any successful environmental movement, that came out of the Taoist philosophy. But we have many, many cases like what I showed in Tibet, in the Tibetan areas. And the reason there are so many successful cases is because of the Tibetan Buddhist culture. That's what is happening.

**Jon Sawyer:**

I agree with both of you. I would refer you back to *Ecological Civilization*, the e-book that we published out of the proceedings of the conference in Beijing last summer. We did have leading Taoist scholars from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The head of the philosophy department from Tsinghua University spoke; he's a Confucianist himself. They were all quite eloquent in speaking about what those traditions say about where we are in terms of the environment today. And I also agree with Liu Jianqiang that if you look at the last 10 years or so, and I tried very hard to do so, it's hard to find instances of Taoism actually influencing actions on the ground.

I went down to the Taoist monastery outside Nanjing because I had been told about the International Taoist Ecological Association and that the leader of the monastery there was really in the forefront of the environmental movement. It turned out a little different. The monastery was building kind of a Disneyland-style theme park, working with the local government in Nanjing, with ski-lift-style gondolas and a statue 50-feet high

of Lao Tzu's head, and it was promoted as a tourist development. They did have solar-powered street lights but the head monk at the monastery came off to me as more of a businessman than a religious leader. I liked him; he was a nice guy. He did a lot of work and he was trying to preserve the Taoist tradition, but they weren't really doing things on the level of what the Tibetan Buddhists have done, that Jianqiang was talking about.

One of the things that was really interesting about the Beijing conference was the extent to which people addressed frontally how detrimental Western culture had been to the Chinese environment and the materialism that came in from the West and the focus on growth and all of the consumer things that were associated with the American way of life. You may know that China is now the fastest growing beef consumer in the world. If they get to our level of beef consumption then God help us all because there's not enough cattle in the world and the methane from cows is already one of the greatest contributors to climate change. So they're looking, these philosophers in Beijing who were quite eloquent and drawing from Confucianism and Taoism and Buddhism. They're saying that we need to go back to these ancient traditions that really do have a great deal to say about living in harmony with nature.

**Audience question:**

What about the role of Western religious traditions and their influence on attitudes toward the environment?

**Justin Catanoso:**

Something that was quite encouraging in Paris was just how many faith groups were there. GreenFaith, for example, and Christian Care. There were lots of Catholic groups over there, lots of Jewish groups over there. The Muslim faith, after Laudato si came out, came out with their own document calling on Muslims to protect the environment around the world. It's like the Pope Francis factor has put an emphasis on something that has been going on for years. The faith community has been involved in environmental protection for a very long time. GreenFaith, which is based in New Jersey, is an example of this. They are training priests to give sermons. They are building solar-panel farms to create energy and they are suing polluters to get them to stop polluting. They are going around and teaching various places how to divest from fossil fuels. There are a variety of religions that are doing this and it's hard to kind of pull it all together. It's just that when I was in Paris I was looking for it and I could see that this movement was starting to build and it's not just Catholics. It's just at that tipping point. It's obvious to everyone except maybe the Republican Party that we've gone a little bit too far with our exploitation of natural resources. And it's what the pope says on every page: This is unsustainable. So we need to learn how to live in harmony with nature if we are going to have life on earth 100 years from now.

**Audience question:**

How do we reconcile the good bits of some of these religious environmental messages with knowing that sometimes religion can also create problems?

Justin Catanoso:

I think this is happening at a parish-by-parish basis and people are sort of being led by their own beliefs and decide what elements of this they are capable of implementing and want to accept. One of the things that is missing from the encyclical is that there isn't anything about population control. That's probably one of the greatest disappointments. We can't have 12 billion people on earth and that's kind of where we're headed. So this is not a perfect document but it's a pretty awesome document in a lot of ways and I do think that you can go in and make choices and find elements of this that can guide you in your parish, in your community, in ways that make a difference.

**Audience question:**

Please talk a little more about the interconnectedness of Buddhism and how nature and environment are part of the faith itself.

**Liu Jianqiang:**

Very good question. You know, Tibetan people don't think that the grass and the trees are inanimate beings. They believe there is a life living in the mountain and maybe the common people cannot see that. But the trees across in some forest have life so you have to take good care of them. So that makes good friends with the sacred mountain's god. It is not God, it just has another kind of life. It's quite different when you don't think trees are alive, that they are just some symbol. So why do we protect a river? That's their idea. Why do we protect a river? You know, it's not only for people to have the clean water to drink. No. He told me you can imagine how many sentient lives depend on the river. When we protect the river we actually protect so many sentient lives.

And I would like to talk a little bit about the Tibetan Buddhist I met. Actually, there is a difference between the practice of Tibetan Buddhism and Western religion's role on environment protection in China. It's very interesting. I can't see the big influence of the Catholics on environment in China. I find that many people doing environmental protection will convert to Buddhist. Christianity is booming in China too—and I find that many lawyers working on human rights convert to Christianity. That's very interesting. But I don't find many of these priests saying I have to protect the environment. That's very rare. So you have different spheres, different areas of emphasis, among the religions.

**Jon Sawyer:**

Part of that has to do with the theological traditions themselves. It's really more emblematic of the Christian tradition in terms of reconciling nature and humanity because so much of Christian theology is about the primacy of humankind over nature. It's about how life is a veil of tears and we get through it the best way we can and paradise is everlasting afterward and it doesn't really matter what you do to the environment. People like Mary Evelyn Tucker and the Religion and Ecology Forum at Yale have been working really hard to kind of rethink the Christian tradition on this, to pull out more of the strands that talk about a holistic approach. I think it's there, deep seated, in Taoism and Confucianism and Hinduism, but not so much in Christianity.



## Panel 2: Religion and Reproductive Rights

Moderator: Tim Townsend

Author of *Mission to Nuremberg*; former religion reporter, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

So religion, and I don't even know what to call it. You know, this is culture wars. There are so many different terms for what we are about to talk about. You can't have been a journalist really, in the last 40 plus years since *Roe v. Wade*, and have escaped covering the culture wars, for lack of a better term, in one way or another. Much of the great journalism in this area has taken seriously the religious questions around women's reproductive rights and health. It is easy, and I would also say lazy, and I would also say common, to do the opposite. When the religious questions surrounding abortion are asked and contraceptives are handled with reporterly curiosity, with an intention of explaining historical and critical nuances of the religious objections to audiences, hungry to understand them, the results are so important.

It's an election year. Surprise. So we are reminded that the culture wars are still with us two generations after *Roe*. But in a lot of ways, it has been the journalism that has helped Americans, at least those who want to try, inch somewhat closer to an understanding. Our panel today is filled to the brim with people who have worked hard to try to bring those nuances forward.

Cynthia Gorney is currently a *National Geographic* writer who has worked for the magazine and has written recent stories on

child marriage, reproductive rights in Brazil, and women in Saudi Arabia. She has written about abortion law and women's issues in pieces for *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's*, *Slate* and other publications. And her insanely good book, *Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion War*, used Missouri as the setting for a national story. She lives in California and has been on the faculty of UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism.

Tom Hundley is senior editor at the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Before joining the Pulitzer Center he was a newspaper reporter for 36 years, including nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*. During that time, he served as the Tribune's bureau chief in Jerusalem, Warsaw, Rome and London, reporting from more than 60 countries. Tom graduated from Georgetown University and holds a master's degree in international relations from the University of Pennsylvania.

Lauren Herzog is program director at the World Faiths Development Dialogue. She works at the intersection between religion and development in Senegal, with a particular focus on reproductive health. She holds a master's degree in French and international development from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Lauren has received two foreign language and area

study fellowships, to study the Wolof language of Senegal. She has lived and worked in both Senegal and Congo-Brazzaville.

Laura Bassett is a senior politics reporter for the *Huffington Post*, where she has been covering women's rights and health issues for six years. For her Pulitzer Center project, Laura spent a month in Kenya looking at the effects of U.S. abortion restrictions on women in developing countries and conflict zones.

So let's take you guys in that order and we will have Cynthia come up first.

Cynthia Gorney  
Reporter, *National Geographic*;  
Author of *Articles of Faith*

I am going to try and keep it short, on a topic that we all know, of course, we could hold forth on for hours.

First of all, thank you Pulitzer Center folks for bringing this together, and also for sponsoring one of my current projects with *Geographic*. It's a multi-country examination of the particular hardships that widows face in societies where additional burdens are added to the obvious dreadful burden of widowhood itself. The Pulitzer Center has been a big supporter of that.

I want to take a weird trajectory from St. Louis to Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. What I want to talk about here is the lives of four different people, very quickly, with a broad theme of the grappling between cultural and social morals and religious faith. And if there is a point ultimately to be drawn from all this it is going to be a point about the incredible importance of this grappling to multiple people that I have interviewed over the years.

My years in St. Louis, and I am happy that the family that sort of adopted me during my reporting time are here to my great delight, sort of my surrogate parents during my six years that I spent working on this book, which traced one particular abortion case, which made it to the Supreme Court, that is what set me off on my journey as a way of telling the history of the abortion conflict in the United States, over what I saw as the crucial 25 years. The person I want to introduce you to, for purposes of this conversation, is one physician, a guy named Matt Backer. And Matt Backer, who has now passed away since the time we spent many, many hours talking together, was a Catholic physician, an ObGyn, who lived here in St. Louis, and who was very much involved in some of the first efforts to stop the law from changing.

The most fascinating part of my work here had to do with coming to understand how strong the Catholic Church was in this state, which is a very organized Catholic state, and in many other states, in developing what came to be known as the "Right to Life" movement. And paradoxically for me, because I come from a very secular region of Northern California, the San Francisco Bay area, the thing that most fascinated me, and what Dr. Matt Backer was able to teach me most, was how they were to our secular eyes, promoting what seemed clearly to us to be Catholic Doctrine—and they did not understand it that way at all. They saw that their faith was pushing them to do the thing that was right, and they saw stopping abortion as a thing that was right—in the same category as you don't kill other



human beings. So over and over, not just Dr. Backer, but other Catholics with whom I talked who were very integral in the early efforts to keep the Missouri law from changing. Those of you who remember that time know that it began way before 1973 when the Supreme Court said, in one fell swoop, that abortion was a right that women needed to be able to exercise all over the country. Missouri was a state like many others, where the battle was fought out at the state level over and over again before that decision came.

The Catholics who were very involved made it clear to me that they did not understand this to be a Catholic issue. Why did they not understand this to be a Catholic teaching? Because they had all gone to Catholic schools and in Catholic schools you learn all kinds of things. You learn the Catechism, you learn that you don't eat meat on Fridays even though your Protestant neighbors do, and you learn that the sky is blue. You learn that you don't kill other people, you learn that you don't strike a stranger on the street. "Are those last three things Catholic teachings?" They would say to me, "No, they're obvious. Just because we learn them in Catholic School does not make them Catholic teaching." And this view was so widespread, across the bulk of the populace that became the opposition to legalized abortion that it really made me understand that you could be involved in the United States in a movement that it seemed to you was about social change and social good. And make it very clear to yourself and those around you that it wasn't religious faith that was driving you to do this, because we don't allow that, theoretically, in the United States. We are supposed to be a country where your religious faith does not interfere with law and public policy.

So I am going to take you from there to Brazil, where many years later I was on assignment for the *Geographic* doing a story about the precipitous drop in the fertility rate in Brazil. This was a big part of a population growth project that the *Geographic* had sent us out in various ways to report. Brazil was our country of choice because it is enormous, because it happens, for a number of reasons, to have extremely good fertility and population control record keeping and because I am sure as many of you know, it is a very strong and Catholic country, and nonetheless, the rates of fertility that had been of such concern when *The Population Bomb* was written, and when the first real alarms went out, had plummeted in Brazil to the point that they were beginning to worry about whether or not they were not going to have a population replacement rate. So the question was, "Why did this happen?" And there were a number of reasons. Some of them having to do with peculiarities of the Brazilian medical

system, but the primary reason people told me over and over was because women decided that they were going to take this matter into their own hands. They were going to control their own fertility rate. How did they do it in a place where contraception was illegal for most of their adulthoods? Abortion was certainly illegal and certain modes of contraception were impossible to get but they made their own choices.

Sterilization remains one of the most popular forms of birth control in Brazil. We know how the Catholic Church feels about sterilization. And in addition, the Brazilian medical practice, even though theoretically removed from the church, made tubal ligation not exactly illegal, but impermissible in most circumstances unless the woman's life was in immediate danger. Nonetheless, women understood how to get doctors, when they happened to be in there already for some other reason, to just do a tubal ligation while they were in there and not mention it to anybody. And the second person I want to introduce you to thinking about this is an elegant lady, very educated, quite faithful, in a home, I believe it was in Sao Paulo, saying, "Priests, they're wonderful for some things, not so wonderful for other things." Right? They don't get it. So again, this is a woman, making her own choice about how the intersection of her religious faith and the acts that she does and what turns into public policy are going to get carried out.

I take you next, around the globe, to a tiny village in the State of Rajasthan, which for those of you who have traveled in India, is an enormous state in the north, very traditional in many ways. We are talking about primarily Hindus all across Rajasthan, but as with the rest of India, there is a multiplicity of religious faiths there. The reason we were in Rajasthan was for this child marriage project, which again, was supported by the Pulitzer Center, and I was working with the wonderful photographer Stephanie Sinclair. The reason we are in this little, tiny town is because we have been told that there is going to be a wedding of three underage girls there. It is not until we have been there for some hours that we realize that the five-year-old girl Rashmi, who is walking around being a happy five-year-old, is going to be one of the brides at this wedding. Which causes all of us, the three of us who were there, Stephanie, me, and our interpreter, to go into a spasm of journalistic freak-out.

What are we going to do about this five-year-old who is about to get married? And the answer, of course, is nothing. Because if we snatch this child, throw her over our shoulders and run out of the village, which is our initial impulse, we are going to destroy her life. We are going to cut her off from everything she knows, and we are going to shame her family forever, and we are going to bring this entire village into disrepute. We can't do it; it is not our right. So we have to watch this child get married, along with her two older sisters, who were just old enough to understand and be extremely grim faced about what was happening to them, and we watched this midnight ceremony, which was, important to remember, illegal in India. Child marriage has been illegal for a century there, even though Gandhi's wife was nine, the first woman he married. But nonetheless it is illegal in India. It remains, again, such an important part of culture and economics, as well as an understood level of religious practice, that the ceremony itself was terribly religious, but you would not find any important Hindu priests promoting this.

What you had, in the case of this little child Rashmi, was a family that was very poor, a farming family. They understood that the only fate for Rashmi if she was not married, was to go as an

unmarried child out into the fields where she would probably be raped, because she was unmarried. That was the culture in India. The best way to protect this child was to declare her married to a boy in another village, and thereby she would be labeled as a married woman. She would not actually go to him until she was eleven or twelve, by which time she would be old enough to have sex and enter into a married relationship. That is what they could do for her, that was the most loving, imaginable thing and they needed the sanction of the priests to be able to do it. So this is a cultural practice that is justified by religion, but is not really coming from any form of religious teaching. Right?

Last stop: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This is how I was going to get from St. Louis to Riyadh. The reason that I went to Saudi Arabia is that I had heard that there were changes underway. To all of us here, unless you have traveled or worked in Saudi Arabia, I am fairly certain that your notion of women's lives in Saudi Arabia corresponds to mine two years ago, which was to be mystified and horrified at a society that would require all of its women to constantly drape themselves in black, not let them drive, and so on. All of those famous things we know about Saudi Arabia. When you actually get to Saudi, I discovered, and spend weeks and weeks and weeks in constant conversation with women,

you learn things that completely throw your worldview into disarray. You learn that the rate of education in Saudi Arabia is better than in many, many other countries that I think we refer to as the "second-world." More women than men graduate from college, there are all kinds of new things happening

with women in terms of work and opportunity, and, at the same time, they live a life that I am sure would strike every woman in this room as horrifying. Yes, they have to wear a long garment, generally black, whenever they go outside. Yes, the hair must be covered. Yes, they cannot drive. Yes, there are a multiplicity of jobs that are closed to them. Yes, many of them cover their faces when they go outside because culture and tribal practice teaches them that to go outside with your face uncovered is pretty much the equivalent of all the women in this room today deciding to take off their shirts and underwear. No law would prevent us from doing it, but we wouldn't do it, and you know why we wouldn't do it, and you know why you wouldn't expect us to do it. The face is the same for much of Saudi culture. And the image I want to leave you with here, before we start on the panel, is of my friend Noof Hassan.

I decided after talking and talking and talking and talking and having my brain blown up a hundred ways about Saudi Arabia, to weave my story around one woman who is about 30 years old. Very articulate, very warm, very ordinary—if I can be so impertinent as to call any Saudi woman ordinary the same way one might call any American woman ordinary, as there is an enormous variety of levels of rebellion and conservatism in Saudi Arabia. Ordinary in the sense that she has a family, she has a job, a supervisory job in a factory, she has got a very supportive husband, who is really a good guy, she is articulate. She is not Western educated; all of her education has been in Saudi Arabia. She has got a wonderful sense of humor, she has seen Titanic nine times even though you can't see it in Saudi, but you can get it on DVD. And I said to her, there is a pretty intense unmarried woman enjoying herself in a sexual act scene in the Titanic, and she said "It's okay. It's her culture. Right?" That was it.

Noof covers her face whenever she goes outside. Noof does not shake hands with men. When Noof finds herself in a seat on an airplane with a man next to her, she asks to be moved. Why does she do these things? Because both her culture teaches her

to do that and she believes it is Islamically correct to do it. And she believes it is Islamically correct to do it in Saudi Arabia, but maybe not necessarily outside Saudi Arabia.

So what I leave you with is a kind of a flip side, if you will, going back to Dr. Backer in St. Louis. My point is that on matters of women's rights, women's lives, women's daily lives in society, every case that I have reported around the world involves intense grappling with religious faith. What would God want? What is taught to me by the faith that I believe is the right one? But at the same time, what is really at work is, what does the culture expect of me? What does my own family expect of me, in terms of respecting them, in terms of the culture they raised me with? And the degree to which one interferes with the other is largely a function of where they were raised, where they grow up, and what the broad message of their society is.

**Tom Hundley**  
Senior Editor, Pulitzer Center

I have been writing about the alarmingly high abortion rates in several Southeast Asian countries. The one in particular that I find most interesting is Indonesia.

As a rule, Muslim countries usually have comparatively low abortion rates, but Indonesia, the most populous Muslim nation, has one of the highest abortion rates in the world even though it has very restrictive abortion laws. More than 2 million abortions are performed here each year, a rate of 37 for every 1,000 women of child-bearing age.

I think it is understood that restrictive abortion laws do not necessarily result in lower abortion rates. The generally low rates in Muslim countries are most likely the result of other social and cultural factors.

Egypt, for example, has highly restrictive abortion laws; Turkey has fairly liberal abortion laws, but the abortion rate for both countries is about 15 per 1,000—or slightly lower than the 16.9 rate in the U.S.

Theocratic Iran has an estimated abortion rate of 7.5 per 1,000 women. Interestingly, abortion is highly restricted in Iran, but in the name of economic development, Iran's ayatollahs have initiated a family planning program that is often described as a model for the developing world. Iran's leadership has changed course on this policy a few times. But experts attribute Iran's low fertility rate and low abortion rate to the widespread use of government-subsidized contraceptives.

What I found in Indonesia—in addition to a pervasive reluctance to even have a conversation about this taboo topic—is that while public opinion and the law take a consistently rigid stance against abortion, Islam offers a much more pragmatic approach.

Islamic jurisprudence does not encourage abortion, but unlike the Catholic Church, it does not absolutely forbid it. Scholars of the Hanafi school of Islamic law, the most widely followed of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence in the Sunni

world, generally accept that abortion is allowable within 120 days of conception. In Indonesia, where the Shafi'i school is predominant, the ulema (religious scholars) agree that abortion is allowed within 40 days of conception—this reflecting the commonly held belief that Allah instills the fetus with a soul on the 40th day.

Opinion varies widely on permissible grounds for abortion. Almost all religious scholars agree that abortion is allowed to save the life of the mother. A 2005 study in Indonesia found surprising tolerance among Muslim clerics for terminating a pregnancy in the event of contraceptive failure or when an unwanted pregnancy would result in severe economic or psychological stress.

Anti-abortion activists in Indonesia—many of them religious fundamentalists—are quick to blame the growing demand for abortions on promiscuity among increasingly secularized youth and pervasive Western cultural influences.

But as one abortion rights activist told me: “Women in hijab also have unwanted pregnancies. When these women come to us, they often have this feeling of guilt. We explain to them what the (Islamic) scholars say. Most of them have never heard this; it helps them make their decision.”

Studies of Indonesian women seeking abortions do not shed much light on the nature of their religious belief, but they do show that nearly two-thirds are married and almost half already have at least two children.

Despite the threat of long prison sentences for anyone providing or receiving an abortion, the fact more than 2 million abortions are performed each year suggests it's pretty easy to obtain one.

The Indonesian government's willingness to overlook this reality speaks volumes about the prevailing mindset on abortion: Loud public condemnations of abortion on moral and religious principle, but a willingness to tolerate the practice as long as it is kept in the deep shadows.

In Jakarta, I had no trouble finding my way to what appeared to be a clean, safe gynecology practice willing to provide on-the-spot service for about \$400. I didn't even have an address. A taxi driver, who incorrectly assumed that the young translator working with me was pregnant, knew the place.

For Indonesian women not living in large metropolitan areas like Jakarta, or those who can't afford the \$400 fee, it can be harder. Often, the first step is an herbal concoction generically referred to as jamu. Easily and legally purchased in grocery stores, pharmacies and street stalls, jamu is a folk remedy for a “late period.” If swallowing jamu

doesn't work—and it usually doesn't—the next step is a visit to a *dukun*, or traditional healer (or shaman) who specializes in “deep massage” or other more intrusive techniques. The frequent result here is a botched or partial abortion that requires an emergency visit to a hospital for a proper surgical abortion to save the mother's life.

The number of serious complications related to botched abortions is not known, but Indonesia's Ministry of Health estimates that about 30 to 50 percent of maternal deaths in Indonesia are the result of unsafe abortions. The ministry, it seems, does not bother with actual abortion numbers.



out religious experts. In particular, I wanted to understand the thinking behind a 2005 fatwa issued by the National Ulama Council (MUI) that appeared to open the door for legalized abortion. Although an Ulama Council fatwa would not be legally binding, it normally carries great weight.

One Islamic scholar who serves on the Council and was a member of parliament for more than a decade, told me that the moderate tone of the 2005 fatwa was a fair reflection of how the majority of Indonesians view the abortion question. “Indonesians are moderate in their thinking and Islam here is quite moderate. Most of the (Islamic) experts agreed that abortion is permissible under certain circumstances.” He blamed a recent hardening of attitudes on the growing influence of Saudi-funded “Wahhabists” in Indonesia.

The current secretary of the Ulama Council’s fatwa council, pointed out that while almost all of Indonesia’s religious scholars agreed that abortion was permissible to save a woman’s life and many agreed that rape and “genetic deficiency” of the fetus were also permissible grounds, they strongly disagreed with the approach of “pro-choice” groups in the West. “The idea that abortion is the right of a woman—this is very wrong according to our view,” he said.

Interestingly, I heard similar views from Indonesian women who supported abortion rights. This surprised me. It wasn’t what I was expecting. I was maybe a little disappointed that I wasn’t hearing a strong feminist voice. (As journalist, you always want to have strong, clear voices in your story.) So I sort of buried what they had to say pretty deep in what was quite a long magazine piece. This is what I wrote.

“... Still, it sounded strange to hear young, educated and thoroughly cosmopolitan women say that they do not believe their bodies ‘belong’ solely to them. But here was Diana Pakasi, a researcher in the University of Indonesia’s gender studies program, pointedly explaining how various local NGOs, supported by some of the most prominent women’s advocacy organizations in the world, often made the mistake of trying to impose ‘Western values’ without fully considering the power of deeply held Indonesian values, a mistake that led to bruised feelings and ineffective reproductive health programs.

‘In our culture, you have to consider what your father says, what your husband and your extended family say. You have to consider what your religion says,’ Pakasi told me. ‘In all aspects of your life—how you dress, your marriage, your relation to your husband—always you have to listen to what the family says.’

Or as Tunggul Pawestri, one of the leading feminist voices in Indonesia, put it: ‘Even within women’s groups, you find that [support for abortion rights] is not really solid. There are so many who think, ‘My body is not my own. It belongs to my father, my husband, my family.’”

As it turned out, those were the most significant paragraphs of the entire story. Those were the words that resonated with readers. That’s what people commented on.

One group that was not pleased with 2005 fatwa is the Indonesian branch of Hizbut Tahrir, a controversial organization whose stated goal is the establishment of a global caliphate. In particular, Hizbut Tahrir’s scholars took exception to what seemed to them an improper government intrusion in family planning decisions that they believed should belong solely to a husband and wife (but mainly the husband). They

The relative ease of obtaining an abortion in Indonesia—safe or otherwise—does not explain the extraordinarily high numbers. Usually the opposite is true. The Netherlands, which ruled Indonesia back when it was known as the Dutch East Indies, has some of the world’s most liberal abortion laws and a remarkably low abortion rate.

Under President Sukarno, who led Indonesia to independence in 1945, large families and population growth were encouraged as a matter of national prestige. But priorities changed after Sukarno was deposed in 1967. The new leader, Suharto, recognized the need to curb explosive population growth. Nationwide family planning policies were introduced.

Statistically, this was a huge success—the fertility rate was cut in half—but some measures were quite harsh. Forced sterilizations were not uncommon, and occasionally the military was used to introduce family planning techniques to villagers.

As one of the country’s pioneering reproductive health activists told me, “The motivation was not to empower women, but to strengthen the economy, to make more money.”

Abortion remained illegal but was tolerated as long as it was called something else—menstrual regulation was the preferred term. Funding from USAID helped make family planning and menstrual regulation widely available. That lasted until the Reagan administration and the rise of religious conservatives in the U.S. At the same time, Sukarno’s grip on power was slipping and his political opponents, mainly Islamist groups, saw popular misgivings about family planning and abortion as an opportunity to undermine the regime.

Although reliable statistics are hard to come by, it appears that when funding for family planning dried up, the fertility rate remained about the same—2.6 children per women—but abortion numbers began to climb.

On a recent return visit to Indonesia, I made a point of seeking

also quibbled with the fatwa's view that rape was a permissible ground for abortion, arguing that existing provisions in Islamic law adequately dealt with this situation.

"We were unhappy with the fatwa, but we let it go," the group's spokesmen in Jakarta told me.

Muhammadiyah is another influential Islamic group with century-old roots in Indonesia. It describes itself as a socio-religious reform movement and many of its 30 million members are active in politics. I spoke with Rahmawati Husein, a university professor and former vice president of the group's women's branch. She told me: "Abortion is not a religious problem, it's a social problem."

Or to put it another way, abortion is not an Islamic problem; it's a political problem.

The 2005 fatwa clearly gave Indonesia's politicians the green light to update anti-abortion laws that have been on the books since the Dutch colonial period of the early 20th century, but the politicians, wary of the social taboos and the rising power of religious fundamentalists, dithered. A new health law in 2009 made a modest adjustment to the existing law, allowing what it delicately refers to as "a certain medical procedure" when a woman's life is in danger—but only after her husband gives his permission.

The word "abortion" is not mentioned in the new health law. The Indonesian Ministry of Health continues its refusal to tally abortion numbers and most members of the public are unaware of the country's unusually high abortion rate. This seems to suit politicians and policymakers—if they acknowledged reality, they'd be forced to do something about it.

Lauren Herzog  
World Faiths Development Dialogue, Berkley  
Center, Georgetown University

Now that we have been on our world tour, we are going on to Senegal, West Africa. It has been a couple years that I have been working with religious leaders to engage them in family planning in Senegal, so I thought that I would start with some context on the reproductive health scene in Senegal and explain why it's important, why religious leaders should be engaged.

So to give you some demographics: 50% of the Senegalese population is under age twenty. So if you think about how many people are going to be soon entering child-bearing years, it is going to drastically shift the demographics, they are going to have a huge population boom. The maternal mortality rate in Senegal is 22 times higher than it is in the US; infant mortality is seven times higher. So maternal and child mortality is a huge thing for Senegal. They saw the need to improve maternal and infant health indicators and one of the ways they thought to do that was through family planning. So if you go back to 2012, only 12% of married women at that time were using some kind of contraception. So only 12 married women out of 100 were using contraception, which is incredibly low.

***We need to have faith leaders talk to some of these communities and dispel some of these myths and talk about what religious teachings really say.***

So the ministry of health came up with a new strategy for family planning, and one of the points included was engagement with faith leaders and faith communities. Senegal is a secular country, so if you think about it, why is a secular government putting such an emphasis on faith leaders? Obviously there were some other elements in there, on how to improve supplies and stock, different technical aspects, but why are we putting such a huge focus on engaging with faith leaders? And there are a couple different reasons for that. Number one, there were a lot of people in Senegal who thought, "Oh my religion is against family planning; I can't use it." So that is the first reason. We need to have faith leaders talk to some of these communities and dispel some of these myths and talk about what religious teachings really say.

The other reason is that religious leaders have a huge societal influence in Senegal. There are a few reasons. Senegal is about 94% Muslim and about 4% Christians, and within that 4% almost entirely Catholic. Of the 94% who are Muslim it is Sunni and almost entirely Sufi influence. And those Sufis are broken down into four major Sufi orders, and those four orders have huge influence, and there are members of these religious families and religious communities who have huge influence in the media and in the government. So you will see, during political campaigns, you will have candidates go and visit the different religious leaders trying to seek their favor. Because they know if they can get their favor with this religious leader or that religious leader, that could gain them a lot more votes. So secular, yes, but their secularism plays out very differently than the secularism we know.

So, knowing all that, and knowing that there were a lot of taboos, family planning wasn't much talked about. Islam in particular was against family planning. You even heard some religious leaders in the media, coming out with all these big statements in the media, that family planning was even a Western plot to reduce the population. So how do we combat that?

So a couple years ago, we started with an entry point of a Senegalese religious leader who had worked in the NGO world for a couple of decades but who is a member of one of the most important Senegalese families. So, through him, we started working through his networks, trying to get a talk together with these religious leaders to talk about maternal and child health. I think in the beginning, even he wasn't convinced. I don't think he understood why this was such a big deal.

It was in the summer of 2014 that we had this first meeting that brought together about 30 prominent religious leaders throughout the country, representing the largest religious communities, we had the Christian communities represented, and it was the first time most of these religious leaders were talking about this issue. So why is this a big issue? Why do we need to talk about child and infant mortality? What does our religion actually say about this?

Most of them had never thought about that. So that was quite an interesting starting point, and it has been a slow process, as one might imagine. It is a little bit of a sensitive topic, but from there they started diving into religious teachings. So two prominent Islamic scholars in Senegal wrote what we call

an *argumentere*, which is basically the Islamic arguments in favor of birth spacing. And there have been documents like this in other Muslim-majority countries, but this one was particular



to Senegal. Given the importance of Senegal's religious leaders, it also took into account different statements that they had said, to make it even more Senegal-specific, to have more weight in the community.

So they have done a couple of different things. They originally started by going and visiting the different heads of all of the major religious communities throughout the country. So these were representatives of the major religious communities, but they weren't the head honcho. So they went, and the whole group would go, and this was very much a courtesy visit. So there was kind of a lot of pomp and circumstance and show. It is very much to show your respect, and to get that conversation going, to hear what they say, and to put a bug in their ear as this is something that we need to think about. So that was the first step, and there have been several things that they have done since then. They have started using the power of media. So in Senegal 98% of people say that religion is very important in their daily lives; about 90% of Senegalese regularly watch or listen to some kind of religious media. Religious media is an absolutely huge thing there. So these religious leaders have started doing some radio shows, and just from their last names, people know who they are and they know that this carries weight. The interesting thing is that they say that they are not ready to go on TV, because this is a sensitive issue, and people are okay to hear them say it, but not ready to see them saying this. So sometimes I think that we just have to be patient, and realize that this is happening on Senegalese time and they have to go at their own speed, and what is comfortable for them, without making any kind of shockwaves. Because this was something that at the beginning, a lot of the, a lot of the agencies, even the Senegalese government was very hesitant to support this initiative. They knew that this was important, but they knew that if the religious leaders changed their minds, and decided that family planning wasn't okay, that would destroy any efforts and any advances that had already been made.

One of the more interesting approaches that we have taken is very much at the community level. We pair religious leaders with a Senegalese midwife and they will go and talk to community groups. So they will first go and present it from the religious

perspective, sort of "what does our religion say about family planning" and then "what is the medical side of it." I have been to a couple of these. When husbands and wives go together you notice that the husbands are paying a lot more attention to the religious side. That is not to say that the women aren't interested, but women, their eyes light up whenever the midwife starts talking and pulling out IUD's and showing the women that, "Okay great, now my husband is on board, he knows that our religion is for this, I just want to know what is going to happen to me." And the French word that is most often used to refer to an IUD is device. So women are just absolutely terrified of this, they have heard rumors, but to actually have a midwife come and to show them what this is, completely changes opinions.

So at the community level you can actually kind of see the wheels spinning in people's heads.

Recently they have taken to social media, so I have been trying to help one of the religious leaders learn how to use Twitter, which has been a bunch of fun. He is very particular, and has not quite grasped the 140-character count. But they are trying to get the message out there, and they realized that social media is a great way to connect with young people. We still have some tough conversations about what we can do about youth—because we can push them and we can provide suggestions, but ultimately, it is what they are comfortable doing. I am not a Senegalese religious leader; it's really up to them. That has been a little slow going, but I think they are starting to understand that they can become educated on becoming good mothers, good fathers, without forcing them into promiscuity. But we have a fine line that we are balancing there.

In two years I have seen a huge evolution with these religious leaders. Just about a week ago, I got back with them from going to Mauritania on an exchange trip, to see what the religious leaders had been doing in Mauritania and to share experiences from Senegal. The really interesting thing is that we got in there, and the Senegalese religious leaders are now so proud of the work that they are doing, and they are just rattling off stats about maternal mortality and child mortality, and they just know all the Quranic verses. To see what has changed in just two

years, from the beginning with, “Is this important? Should we be talking about this?” to, “What does our religion actually say about this?” I can remember one of the religious leader, when he first started, saying, “Women have no problems in Senegalese society, everything is perfect, nothing really needs to be changed for them.” But then he talked with other religious leaders and afterwards said, “Women have this great burden in society, we need to do what we can to reduce their burden.” So that has been kind of a huge 180-degree turn—and that is very much from having that community interaction and talking about this and starting to hear the stories of all the women who have had complications with their pregnancies or know someone who has had a complication. I think that has really gotten to them, and they have really taken it upon themselves as now a personal mission.

I’d say, from an American perspective, it has been a little bit slow. But I think we just have to understand that we need to start where they’re at, and this is where they are currently at. Something else that has been important is to see the relationships that this have built between the different religious communities, both the communities within Islam but also between Muslims and Christians. They have gotten to know each other a lot better and as the president of this group we work with likes to say, “If nothing else comes out of this, at least we will have built great relationships and great friendships.” I like to remind him that hopefully, we will do a little bit more than build friendships. Hopefully we will make a little bit more of an impact.

**Laura Bassett**  
Journalist, *Huffington Post*

I am Laura Bassett. I am a politics reporter for *The Huffington Post*. I am covering mostly reproductive rights, and women’s rights, and women’s health in general for about six years. So I have covered a lot of domestic abortion policy issues, the wave of abortion restrictions that is happening across the United States, and I noticed that there was this huge hole in the media’s coverage of how US abortion policy affects women abroad.

There are a pair of policies, the Hyde Amendment and the Helms Amendment. The Hyde Amendment restricts US money domestically from paying for abortion, except in cases of rape, incest and life of the mother. The Helms Amendment is the international kind of “sister law” to the Hyde Amendment. It applies to US foreign aid funding. So no US money can be used to pay for abortions abroad, and in the case of the Helms amendment this has been interpreted to mean no exceptions for rape or incest or the life of the mother.

The consequence of this policy is seen with women in conflict zones, such as the women who are being trafficked by ISIS or the schoolgirls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram. Because the US is the largest donor to women’s health issues in the world, this law kind of ties the hands of humanitarian aid organizations that receive US money. And so you have an organization on the ground, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), that receives funding from the US. They were the people on the ground who were there when the girls were rescued from Boko Haram. They are coming back pregnant and it is the result of rape. The United Nations Population Fund can give them “dignity kits,” things like toothpaste, and they can give them things like birth control, and they can give them post-abortion

care, meaning that if these girls go and get an abortion on their own from some kind of quack doctor or try to do it themselves, they can come back to the UNPF, bleeding and get emergency care, but the UNFPA cannot provide them with abortions and still receive US money, because of this policy. So I wanted to look at the impact of this law—and to show how it affects rape victims in developing countries all over the world, not just in these conflict zones that we read about in the news every day.

So I went to Kenya, because in Kenya there has been a very obvious impact because of this US law being in place, and I will tie it into religion in a bit, but as a sort of background for what happened in Kenya, the maternal mortality rate from abortion is about 30%. Which is just extremely high. And so in 2010, because this was such a massive public health issue, the government put forth a new constitution, that loosens, there used to be a complete ban on abortion in Kenya, and they loosened the constitution in 2010, to say that women in specific emergencies can receive abortion care. Basically Rape, incest and life of the mother. And the church, specifically the Catholic Church in Kenya, but also a few different religions fought tooth and nail against this new constitution, and tried to get people in the country not to vote for the whole constitution because of this one little loosening of the country’s abortion laws, but the population overwhelmingly voted for the new constitution and it went into effect. So the Ministry of Health put out these guidelines on the safe provisions of abortion. And they explained the circumstances in which doctors and nurses can provide abortion. If a woman has an emergency that affects her health, which can be either mental health or physical health, rape, incest and life of the mother, and that is actually really broad in Kenya, because doctors can basically just say anything is going to affect a woman’s mental health. This was a really big deal for women in Kenya, where abortion is mostly hugely taboo there, and women were going to, as I said, quack doctors earlier. Quack doctors can be either really not doctors at all or doctors who provide abortions illegally. They are very unsafe; they use different methods that are not sanitary and not medical. Sometimes there are these hard grasses that release a poisonous milk, that they will insert inside the uterus and it will perforate the uterus and girls end up in the emergency room. There are all kinds of unsafe things they do to try and end these desperate women’s pregnancies.

So the Ministry of Health put forth these guidelines and after a year or so, when the guidelines were in effect, things were improving, in terms of abortion access for women there, doctors and nurses were getting trained on how to do it safely, and then at the end of the year, the Ministry of Health held a meeting to discuss the new guidelines. And US AID sent a letter to its contractors in Kenya, basically everywhere that receives foreign aid funding, saying, “None of you are allowed to attend this Ministry of Health meeting on maternal health because they will be talking about the new abortion guidelines, and the Helms Amendment restricts you from having anything to do with that.” The next day, the Ministry of Health revoked the safe abortion guidelines, and sent a letter to all the clinics in Kenya, saying “We don’t want you to import the abortion drug; we don’t want you to do this anymore.” So suddenly, it just kind of completely revoked the progress that had happened over the previous year, because they were afraid of jeopardizing US foreign aid money, which the country heavily depends on.

So I went over there, and I met with this 16-year-old girl, who was actually the perfect example of how the US policy plays out on the ground in Kenya. She lives in a tiny town, she is the daughter of a farmer, and she is on the border of Kenya

and Uganda. She is 16 years old and she was raped by a local politician. She became pregnant and it was the same month that US AID had sent out this letter, and that the Kenyan government had sort of revoked legal abortion as a result. Nurses were no longer offering abortions; they were afraid. Policemen were harassing providers, trying to trick them into saying that they offered abortion, and then they would arrest them or extort them for money. So everyone was too afraid, at this moment, to offer anyone a safe abortion. So this 16 year old went to the politician and said, "I'm pregnant" and he said, "I'll arrange for you to go see a quack doctor." So she went to see this quack doctor without telling her parents, and he gave her an abortion that gave her sepsis, which is basically an infection all over her body. By the time she came back to her parents, she was near death and they had to take her to the emergency room, which they couldn't afford. So her father owned ten cows, which he was using to support the family—he has five or six children—and he was sending them and Consulatta, this girl, selling milk from the cows. And he was also operating a small restaurant in his front yard. So he had to sell six out of ten of his cows to pay for the emergency room care.

And then the police found out that she had had this unsafe abortion and they threw her in jail. The 16 year old. Not the politician who raped her and took her to the quack doctor. So her father had to sell another one of his cows to bail her out of jail. Then he had to pull all of his kids out of school, because he could no longer afford tuition, and so this had a ripple effect that basically financially ruined the family. I spent some time with her. She wants to be an engineer, she is extremely smart, she loves school, she loves math, and she is—in addition to having all these lingering health issues from her sepsis—she is just devastated that she could not finish school. I went over there to tell her story, to try and put a human face on what this policy means, because I think people in the United States do not think about the Helms Amendment. They don't know about it or maybe they don't care about it. But when you take a look at how it is affecting people, it sort of makes a difference.

So what is happening is that on the US policy side the Helms Amendment was enacted in 1973. The wording says, "The US will not pay for abortion as a method of family planning abroad." It doesn't say anything about exceptions like rape, incest or the life of the mother. It does not say anything about exceptions. It just doesn't say. And so it is open to interpretation, but every



administration since the enacting of this policy has interpreted it as an all-out ban on funding abortion. Including the Obama administration, which is interesting, because otherwise he is very supportive of abortion rights. So this political question was really interesting to me. It would be a very simple move for him, all he would have to do is issue an executive order, saying, "My administration will interpret this policy as having exceptions for rape, incest, life of the mother." That would at least allow the human rights aid organizations to provide care to these women in conflict zones, and it would help girls like Consulatta because there is such a high rate of sexual assault in Kenya and in many developing countries. It would affect a lot of women, it is not just a narrow exception. So why isn't he doing this? He has been lobbied on this for years. Reproductive rights advocates have met with the White House and have brought women over from Kenya who were raped during post-election violence in 2008 to tell important people in the White House their personal stories of how this policy has affected them, and yet the White House is not budging on it.

The answer is that Obama does not want to pick another fight with religious groups. Some of the major, top-ten recipients of US funding are Catholic and/or evangelical organizations; Catholic Relief Services is one of the biggest. They are the humanitarian aid organizations in these countries who are providing health care, and they refuse to include abortion services as part of what they offer. So if the administration were to say that abortion care is a part of this spectrum of health services, than Catholic Relief Services and evangelical organizations would not or might not be eligible for these grants anymore—and these are many, many million-dollar grants. So there is a lot of money at stake for these organizations, and the Catholic Bishops in the United States are an influential anti-abortion lobby.

The Obama administration just had a big fight with them over the contraceptives mandate in the Affordable Care Act. A small group of nuns called Little Sisters of the Poor is currently suing the Obama administration over requiring employers to cover birth control; they believe some types of birth control are akin to abortion. This has been a really tough issue for the administration to deal with, because they are sort of walking the line between wanting to provide contraception at no cost for women and also wanting to protect religious freedom. So basically what happened was, the bishops came in and said,



Consolatta Wafula, at the age of 16, was raped by a local politician and forced to get an unsafe abortion. Here, she poses for a portrait outside her home in western Kenya. Image by Jake Naughton. Kenya, 2015.

“If you change the Helms Amendment and say that abortion is something that the US is going to pay for abroad, we are going to pick another fight with you, like we did with the contraception mandate.” I guess Obama has calculated that he doesn’t want use his political capital on another fight like that at the moment. So that is sort of the hold-up that I found in the White House.

As to follow-up impact I pressured Hillary Clinton’s campaign to give me an answer on this and I pressured Bernie Sanders’ campaign. I reached out to the Republicans as well—who of course did not respond on this issue—but both Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders said if they were to make it into the White House they would change the Helms Amendment and not cave to the religious lobby. Of course, a Republican administration would be different, because the Republican Party is extremely opposed to abortion right now.

**Audience question:**

Cynthia, could talk about why it is important to create real and full characters, instead of caricatures.

**Cynthia Gorney:**

To me it is pretty simple. I can’t speak for all of us, but many of us as reporters, we have intense curiosity of what the rest of the world thinks. And for me, particularly, as someone who was raised in a great confusion about religion—an atheist-Jewish father and a Presbyterian/we-don’t-go-to-church mother—I have always been intensely curious about the role of religious faith in how people act and what they believe. So I think that our most important job always, as journalists, is just listening. I think that is about as simple as it gets. And people have, as everybody on this panel has indicated, people have very deep feelings. About their faith, their place in culture and what that is going to mean for the way their families live. So that is the best way I think I can handle that.

**Audience Question:**

Getting to the American level, as a non-Catholic, it is my understanding that the Catholic Church is still very adamant against birth control, and I also read that more than two thirds of Catholics use birth control. So how do you reconcile this current incongruity?

**Cynthia Gorney:**

I know that over the years that the abortion wars were developing there was a real split in the Christian faith, in particular, on this very question. There were many Protestant faiths that did not share the absolute ban on birth control, and they ended up joining their Catholic brethren in opposition to the abortion law, while at the same time saying that one of the ways that we can prevent this is to make sure that people are responsibly using birth control. As you all probably know, the religious battle against legalized abortion conjoined, particularly in the late 1970’s, with a political conservative battle—that at its heart didn’t particularly care about women’s issues at all, but saw abortion as a great wedge issue for the renewal, if you will, of the Republican Party. So at that time there were transitions among many of the Protestant churches as well, who were opposed to birth control, not for the Catholic reasons, not because every sexual act should be open to conception, but because promoting birth control promotes immorality, and encourages immoral behavior and encourages sex outside of marriage.

**Laura Bassett:**

It speaks to the broader problem that Catholic churches are having, with the differences between traditional Catholic doctrine and Catholics today. There is sort of a divide in a lot of ways, and we are seeing this slightly more progressive pope, and how he is trying to inch the Church towards the views of its people, so as not to alienate potential new Catholics and current Catholics. I actually just recently covered a Supreme Court case, The Little Sisters of the Poor case—this group of nuns that is suing the Obama administration. I spoke with a nun outside of the court, who was there protesting and supporting her fellow nuns, and I said that very thing to her. I said, “What do you think about the fact that two thirds of Catholics are using birth control?” and she just flat out said, “I don’t think that is true.” So I think that there is also a lot of denial on the Church’s side about what its people are doing. But in addition to that, you made a good point about why they oppose contraception. It is not only because it encourages promiscuity but also there are certain types of contraception—the intra-uterus device and the so-called “Morning After” pill. They believe that scientifically it stops a fertilized egg from implanting inside the uterus, and therefore they think it destroys a life. So they actually see some forms of birth control the same as abortion. That is actually what the big, high-profile Hobby Lobby case was about. It is not just Catholics. It was this evangelical organization that was opposed to having to cover these kinds of birth control, which they believe kill a person, because a person forms at fertilization. So there are two different arguments happening there.

**Tim Townsend:**

It is interesting, because when you ask bishops that question about the gap, the standard answer that I have always gotten is, “Well, then we are doing a bad job teaching people.” Not that it is a problem, but “Yeah, we know there is a gap, but we have been horrible teachers.” And it is interesting, because it is very similar to what Justin was talking about earlier. There is an on-the-ground reality to some Catholic teachings that does not square with people’s lives.

**Audience question:**

This question is for Lauren. You were speaking about the role of religious leaders and midwives, talking about contraception in the home. Do you run into conversations about female genital cutting?

**Lauren Herzog:**

Senegal is actually a country that has taken this on, in a big way. And they have actually seen the number of cases of female genital cutting decreasing pretty rapidly. That being said, it is still practiced in certain ethnic groups. Just a couple of weeks ago, when I was in Senegal, I was surprised to find out that a religious leader—someone I had known for a couple of years, and who I thought was relatively conservative but pretty progressive in terms of Islamic family planning—was really upset to find out that other religious leaders in the same meeting with him were against FGC. And he was just shocked. He said, “Why is everyone against this? This is not against our religion.” And so one of the other Imams said, “Well it is not in our religion.” So you are seeing that kind of discrepancy, of what is in our religion vs. what is not in our religion. Just because it is not in the religion, does that mean that it is permissible? So, I think that one of the ways that it has been taken on in Senegal is that a lot of people have said that our religion requires this. So they try to separate

out what is culture and what is religion. And I have talked with a lot of local religious leaders and they have slowly made it so that communities are banning the practice.

**Cynthia Gorney:**

I would like to add to what Lauren said, something really intrinsic to everything we have talked about here, her reference to talking with the couples, where the husband listens much more to the religious leader and the wife much more to the midwife. The thing I was trying to get at through all of this, particular with genital cutting, was that it is impossible to separate religious faith from the powerful need that people have to be accepted into their communities. To be accepted by their families and by their tribes. One of the world's most effective organizations against genital cutting works out of Senegal, and the way they work is that they go community by community. Because what people are afraid of, when you actually start talking to them, and this is absolutely true in Saudi Arabia as well when women were trying to decide whether they are going to uncover their faces or not, is they are not afraid that God is going to smite them. They are not afraid that they are going to go to hell. They are afraid that their cultures and families are going to speak ill of them and therefore make their own lives untenable, and even more important, destroy the honor of their own families. And this is absolutely true for genital cutting. The reason a mother or a grandmother urges genital cutting is not because she thinks her child is not going to go to heaven, but she thinks it will be that her child will not be able to get married and she will be ostracized. So you have to tackle this community by community. All of this gets packaged with religious faith but what it is really about, I believe, is will I, and more importantly perhaps, will my child, will my family, my progeny, be acceptable as standard in their community. It applies to all these things.

**Tim Townsend:**

I am interested, Laura, in what the Clinton people told you about challenging the Helms Amendment, whether she went into details about how she would, or how her White House would do what the Obama White House is refusing to do. Is it really just that, okay, well, I have had my fight with Catholic Bishops, and you know, now Hillary, it is your turn to have your fight with the Bishops. And is this really the thing that her White House is going to plant a flag against the Catholic Church on, just to deal with contraception in foreign aid?

**Laura Bassett:**

Yes, what I think you just said is exactly right. She has not had a fight with the Catholic Church yet, and so it is her turn, I guess. Her answer, and Bernie Sanders' answer, were different. Hers was that she would add exceptions into the Helms amendment and Bernie went so far as to say he would push to repeal the Helms Amendment. I think that Hillary has been the most pro-abortion rights candidate we have ever had. She is to the left of Obama on the issue. She has made being a woman and women's rights and reproductive rights central to her campaign message. I think that her campaign, if I am being honest, her campaign did not want to answer that question for me, and they were trying to ignore it. They ignored me for weeks, and it was not until I got an answer from the Bernie campaign that they were willing to say something. They had to, they could not look like she was going to turn on women's rights in conflict when Bernie was not going to. So I guess that it was political pressure that kind of forced her to say that. But now it is a thing that she has

said, it is a thing that she will have to follow through on. So, that is the real answer.

**Tim Townsend:**

What was the general overall reaction to your story, other than from the campaigns? Have you gotten any other feedback from other Washington types?

**Laura Bassett:**

There were a bunch of Senate and House offices who reached out and sort of wanted to push the White House on the issue, particularly Senator Blumenthal of Connecticut. He gave a speech on the Senate floor and is now trying to rally his colleagues to write a letter to the White House, asking them to change their policy. So there has been a lot of interest from politicians who are from very blue districts. But I do not think that there will ever be enough, because Republicans can so easily frame this as taxpayer money going to pay for abortion, which is a very unpopular thing. When the issue is framed that way people will say, "Well, I don't want my tax dollars paying for abortion. Why would I want that?" So it is a very difficult fight, for Democrats in general to fight.

**Audience question:**

I have a question about Indonesia. You said that when you first got there, that the government did not even really recognize the problem, but then after two years they sort of acknowledged it. What do you see ongoing? What is the ongoing process as far as abortion and Islam there?

**Tom Hundley:**

The government has been consistently disinterested in it and won't even acknowledge that there is a problem. It puts out absurd abortion death statistics, you know, in the low thousands. No relation to reality. There are activists who seem to keep pushing on this issue, so something may come to pass. The quote I read at the end is that everybody seems to be happy with the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy and even the activists have become somewhat cynical that women, for the most part, if they need an abortion, they can get one relatively easily and it would be better if there was more money spent on contraception and making family planning more accessible for women. But this is not a perfect world.

**Audience question:**

Could any of you comment on the role of marriage in abortion politics? Is most of the conversation about activity and movement inside of marriage, or is it premarital or extramarital? I ask that because it seems to me that a lot of the terror that fuels abortion politics, apart from what you described as genuinely held convictions about murder, has to do with the promiscuity that would occur.

**Cynthia Gorney:**

I can bring this into the Saudi Arabia context, but not about abortion specifically. In Saudi Arabia, to an extent greater than in any of the other Muslim countries, the terror that fuels the articulation of the most conservative parts of society is about chaos. And it is applied both to war and to society. It is, "What will happen if women remove their hijab? If women and men

swim in the same place? If women and men were unrelated and sitting next to each other at a conference like this, without a literal barrier to create separate rooms? What will happen is chaos, unmarried sex.” I mean my friend Noof, who I told you about, we were fascinated by each other’s lives, and I told her that as a responsible and loving parent, I had taken my daughter at 15, to the gynecologist, when she was in a romantic relationship. Noof was horrified. She had come to know me, she trusted me, she knew me to be a decent human being, but she could not put these things together. So I said to her, let’s imagine that your children are older and your son is a girl, what would happen if, at 14 or 15 or 16, she came to you and said I am in love with this boy, and we are going to become intimate? Or worse, that we have become intimate. Noof said that it would be a disaster. Those were her words, a disaster. They would have to have marriages arranged immediately, and the families would live under that shadow of disgrace for many years to come, knowing that it was a forced marriage. And this was not because of pregnancy, but because they have had sex. Now they are doing it, of course, like every society ever, but that fear is very, very prevalent there. I can’t so much speak to the modern American notion of this because the idea that we are not okay with premarital sexuality is so ludicrous in the face of American culture and commercialization right now.

**Tom Hundley:**

To add to what Cynthia was saying, I was amused and smiled at the word that kept coming up from young women to religious leaders. No translation: It was “free sex,” there is going to be “free sex.” You know, I hadn’t heard this since the 70’s, but there was this obsession with “free sex.” Basically they were saying that if you lose the abortion law, it will lead to promiscuity. But in Indonesia, and in every other country in Southeast Asia that I have been looking at, the abortions are typically occurring among married women. They do it because they don’t have access to proper contraceptives and they are trying to limit the size of families.

# Luncheon Talk: Marie Griffith

Director, John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics



Introduction: Holden Thorp  
Provost, Washington University in St. Louis

Thank you, Jon, and hello everyone. Welcome to Washington University. I'm Holden Thorp. I'm the provost. Since this is a conference that has something to do with religion, I'll tell you all where the name "provost" comes from. All of the titles we have in the university come from the church. You know, Oxford and Cambridge are Anglican in origin and a lot of things flow from them. A lot of our buildings are copied from Oxford and Cambridge at a time when people weren't contemplating air travel. So they thought, "Well, we can just rebuild Cambridge as a building here and nobody will know." But the names "provost," "dean," and "chancellor" all come from positions of responsibility in the church. The provost was in charge of keeping the jail. Fortunately we don't have a jail—so I'm the chief academic officer and I tell most people who don't know what universities do that I'm close to a chief operating officer for the university or I tell the students that means I have the same job here that Professor McGonagall has at Hogwarts. They seem able to relate to that.

Fascinating topic here to discuss and I think choosing Washington University as a place to do it really makes a lot of sense. First of all, just a university in general. Yesterday I gave a talk at St. Michael and St. George, which is an Episcopal parish across the street and a very longstanding and active Episcopal church in St. Louis, talking about the higher purpose of higher education, which we seem to be having a hard time holding on to. There are a lot of people who want to over-analyze a lot of things quantitatively about the stuff that we do—what jobs people get, how efficient we are with our resources—and those things are important to pay attention to. But not if paying attention to them means losing sight of the higher purpose of higher education: the preservation and curation of all the

world's knowledge, creation of new knowledge, and teaching people things that don't have an obvious application in the short term but that have enormous applications over the long term of their lives. And that is something that we try every day to preserve and I'll tell a story about that.

I went to talk to the D.C. YPO chapter. Most of you probably know that YPO is the Young Presidents Organization. So this is like a secret society of CEOs. So I was speaking to this group in D.C. So D.C. is a hot city and YPO is a big thing to be a part of it. So these are the hardest charging young people in D.C. And I said, "Okay,"—and it's a group about this size. I said, "If you got a science or business degree, raise your hand." And two hands went up. And I said, "If you got an engineering degree raise your hand." And two hands went up. And that left everybody else, so I said, "If you got a liberal arts degree—and I would count journalism in that—raise your hand," and everybody else's hand went up.

So preserving our ability to create people who have an understanding of the world and its history and the art and music of the past and what it all means and why it was created, you know those are the people who are transforming the world most of the time. And, you know, that, and the library collection and the research we do—you know our education isn't a religion, but it is something that has a higher purpose that is not always quantified and that is something we take very seriously here at Washington University, and there's no better example than that of our Danforth Center on Religion and Politics, which was founded to create new knowledge about American religion and politics and how we got to where we are and to hold events that help us contemplate where we are going to go. And we are very

fortunate to have the Danforth Center here. We have a lot of great things that happen because it is here and the greatest thing is that we recruited Marie Griffith to be the director. I don't get to take credit for that because she was recruited before I got here, but I have learned a lot from her about American religion—which is something I always had a pretty intense interest in, and I just enjoy being able to see the things that she's come up with.

So just to introduce her a little bit and then I'll hand it over to her. And it's a big day on the Danforth campus so unfortunately I won't be able to stay with you because I'm going across the quad to introduce Justice John Paul Stevens at 1:30, so there's a lot of politics and religion and things in the air today. But Professor Griffith obtained her undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia. She received both her MA and PhD in the study of religion from Harvard and upon earning her doctorate she was awarded consecutive fellowships at both Princeton and Northwestern. In 1999, she joined the faculty of Princeton where she filled several roles and from 1999 to

2003, she was associate director of Princeton's Center for the Study of Religion. In 2003 she became associate professor of religion and then full professor in 2005 and was later named director for the Program of the Study of Women and Gender. While at Princeton, she was awarded the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching along with the Cotsen Fellowship for Distinguished Teaching in 2008. Then she returned to her alma mater Harvard University as the John A. Bartlett Professor in the Divinity School, serving, as well, on the faculty for the History of American Civilizations and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. In 2015, she was appointed a distinguished lecturer for the Organization of American Historians. Her books include *The Role of Sexuality and Religion* and she has a new book coming out next year, *Christian Sex and Politics: An American History*. So we are thrilled that Marie Griffith is our director of the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics. You are all very fortunate to be able to hear from her today and so here she is: Marie Griffith.

**Marie Griffith**  
Director, John C. Danforth Center on Religion  
and Politics

Thank you so much, Holden, and thanks to Jon Sawyer and others who invited me to be here. I'm on the program twice today and when I saw that Jon had put me on twice I said, "Jon, isn't that a little too much Griffith for this occasion?" but he assured me he wanted me to speak on two entirely different things, so that's what I'm doing.

So what I want to do now if talk to you a little about the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics, which Holden mentioned, and selfishly it's because I think I can get so many great ideas from the journalists and others who are here about what more we can be doing. Then in the panel this afternoon I'll be continuing our conversation about abortion and talking a little bit more about the U.S. in that session.

The John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics owes its existence to the great generosity of the Danforth Foundation, which was founded in 1927 by Mr. and Mrs. William H. Danforth. The Danforth Foundation over many generations has given a lot of money to St. Louis, as many of you know, to a lot of different initiatives. And then eventually its board of trustees decided to spend down the remaining \$100 million that it had and in 2009 the foundation announced a major gift—two major gifts—but one of them was to Washington University to establish this Center. And we're very fortunate that the Center's namesake, Senator John C. Danforth, has continued his involvement with the Center, although he couldn't be with us today.

The Center really does represent—and I know people say this all the time, but I really mean this sincerely—I think it represents an extraordinary opportunity to make a meaningful difference in our public discussion and debate about religion's role in U.S. politics and perhaps eventually in global politics as well. And I'm very honored to serve as the director as well as the tenured faculty member at Washington University.



So one of the great questions of our time, as you all know well, amid growing internationalism and during global conflicts, such as you've already heard this morning, one of the big questions of our time is how religion, in all of its diverse manifestations and appropriations, will shape the political future. This is a huge question. It is a question so enormous and so daunting that it often overwhelms reason and deliberation. So otherwise rational people can find themselves making absurd attacks on religion per se as if it's this thing we can easily define as some kind of a universally evil force.

And not just people on the other side, of course, presume that their own religious worldview is somehow the unmitigated panacea to world conflict or that somehow their view should prevail over all of others. Many versions of the famous Clash of Civilizations thesis exemplify the urgent attempt to just fathom the sheer complexity of religion. And not just to fathom it, but to achieve some sense of order and control over it. The determination to remake the United States into a Christian nation is another expression of this desire for order and clarity as is the heated impulse to banish all of religion from the public sphere. We have all these arguments—I mean not even taking into account the global context that we are talking about here but just in the U.S. alone—we have all of these arguments and controversies going on today.

As historians of American religion today repeatedly note—and that’s my field, American religious history—the United States has shown itself to be among the most pervasively diverse religious and social experiments in history. Again and again we’ve seen that religion in America is a history of struggle and contested boundaries, of groups struggling to put their own stamp on American culture and politics and then, all too often, striving to keep others from altering that.

Dissenters and mystics, eclectics, spiritual borrowers, restless seekers and theological innovators have always comprised an important part of the American religious landscape, making up what one historian has termed “the oneness and the many-ness” of American religion. And if by “oneness” that scholar meant a traditional public role that has been played by Protestantism in our nation’s social, legal and political history, and of course it still very much does, at the same time the “many-ness” denotes the many other ways of being religious that have flourished over time. So we’ve always, in this sense, been a nation of religious seekers, and one in which the spirit of independence and individualism has led to this sort of burgeoning religious entrepreneurial culture. Radical new religious movements abound, such as the Mormons and the Mennonites in the nineteenth century, the Oneida Perfectionists, transcendentalists, Christian scientists, new thought meditators and many, many more over time.

But major developments have occurred in recent decades that I do think render the contemporary scene unique in its religious diversity. So three changes that I would throw out for you as being the most important and most documented by journalists and scholars alike had been: first of all, foremost, new immigration patterns in the wake of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965; second, new models of interreligious encounter and collaboration but also conflict, that have arisen in recent decades in part, if not because of, the new media culture spawned in the midcentury and accelerating especially since the 1980s and 1990s; and third, an increasing emphasis in many religious communities upon transnationalism and global concerns and I guess we can say increasing ease of travel and movement across transnational boundaries.

And we can add other causes to all this, but as a result of these and other changes, we live in an era of irrefutable religious globalization. One in which traditions, such as Mormonism, Pentecostalism, Islam, continue to grow rapidly, not only throughout the world, but here in the U.S. too. And while these and other religious groups continue to multiply, proliferate, sort of move off each other, sort of sprout new kinds of groups of Mormons, Pentecostals, Muslims and all other groups as well.

So in the wake of these tidal shifts that have taken place since the 1950s, you can say, I think, that the United States today is something like a mirror of the world’s religions. So all of these changes pointing to the rapid intensification of our nation’s religious multiplicity have created or exacerbated changes in American politics as well, diverse people obviously agreeing with them, divergent beliefs, styles of worship and moral codes. And often enough these divergences cause enough friction to land in court as they do again and again.

The question for devoutly religious persons of all kinds in our country is how to square their convictions with the mandates of democratic governance in a heterogeneous republic. This gets back to things Cynthia said. When is it religion and when is it just truth? And when is it democracy and when is it democratic values and when are these religious values? We argue about this

over and over again.

So in light of all of this context, not to mention the recent conflicts we’ve witnessed and congressional and presidential campaigns, the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics could not be a more timely venture. We’re now completing our fifth year of full staffing and programming and it’s really the sort of sixth year of actual existence. The Center serves as an open venue and is trying to be an ideologically neutral or ideologically open or poly-partisan venue open to all points of view, or at least most points of view. And we try to be a venue for both fostering rigorous scholarship about religion and politics while also educating the broad public and public communities about the intersections of religion and U.S. politics.

So essentially we think that our commitment is threefold. First, to support and enhance outstanding scholarly research on both the historical and contemporary intertwining of religion and politics. Second, to disseminate that scholarship more broadly, more widely, or to translate academia for the broader public because we all know there’s often that gap that journalists, I think, feel as well. So we do this in a number of ways that I’ll mention in a moment. And then third, we really exist in part to foster debate and discussion among people who hold widely different views about religion and politics. And that is our greatest challenge, as you might imagine.

The Center is named, of course, for former U.S. senator from Missouri, John C. Danforth, who is an ordained Episcopal priest. He served three terms as a Republican in the U.S. Senate and he was also the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. The Center owes a debt to

Senator Danforth’s own vision of imagining how religion can play a positive role in politics—and in any case, trying to better understand both its positive and its divisive role. Because it’s always both.

Danforth is the author of two books. The first is *Faith and Politics: How the Moral Values Debate Divides America and How to Move Forward Together from 2006* and more recently, *The Relevance of Religion: How Faithful People Can Change Politics*, published in 2015. And as some of you may know, Jack was a religion major during his undergraduate years at Princeton, and in fact his family provided an endowment for that department. When I was still teaching at Princeton, our religion department started a whole annual Danforth lecture and brought in very distinguished speakers for public lectures. So I was long interested in Senator Danforth because of this connection, but also I admired his writing on religion and politics. He and I do not agree politically on everything by a long stretch, and we know that, but I do have the greatest admiration for his critique of recent cooptations of political parties for religious ends and his critique of the cooptation of religious communities for political ends. I also concur with his hope that religious communities can effect positive changes in our world as well.

One concern that I share with Senator Danforth and I that think our center has to stand for is the need to chart more robust alternatives alongside and in between—I’m not always comfortable with these words, but I’ll just use them for shorthand—“extreme right and extreme left positions.” In other words, to move beyond, in some way, the polarizations that fuel what many call the culture wars and that all too often derails our country’s civic discourse.

***We live in an era of irrefutable religious globalization.***

So like others here, I'm sure, I'm weary of the silencing sometimes of other voices in religion and elsewhere. And really an overarching theme of my own scholarly work has been to illuminate the constructive common ground needed for ongoing civil debate and democratic participation. So this does mean bringing together people who may not ordinarily care to speak with each other about divergent points of view on issues such as health-care reform, tax policy, gay marriage or abortion, like the common ground on pro-life and pro-choice that Cynthia wrote about in *Articles of Faith*.

So the goal of these gatherings isn't to just find some wishy-washy latitude on which we all may agree, but it's to try and shed light on the different world views that are animating these disagreements. To really try and understand the moral values, the different worldviews, on different sides of the debate and not some evil intent or immorality on the part of others. So my view is that moral world views deserve respect and not snarky contempt as they often get.

So in terms of programming, just a few words about that. We offer a broad range of public lectures, conferences and symposia that focus on issues related to religion and U.S. politics. We've brought in speakers like E.J. Dionne, Jonathan Walton, William Inboden, Sarah Barringer Gordon, Robert Putnam, Andrew Preston. We bring in religious leaders: The Reverend Traci Blackmon, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. We've also brought in Senator Joe Lieberman. And then we've brought in, in one two-month period, George Will and Sandra Fluke at the height of what was going on there. That was a hard one, to bring them together at the same event, but we brought them both in together. And most recently we had Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

***So my view is that moral world views deserve respect and not snarky contempt as they often get.***

So we do have a diverse set of offerings and a lot of interesting debates along the way and we do not stand necessarily for any one of these people's positions but we want to bring them in, discuss with them and debate and argue.

This fall, some of you may know Washington University is one of the campuses that's hosting one of the big presidential debates this fall. That's going to be Oct. 9 and the day before that debate we are hosting something we're calling the Danforth Dialogues, which is a program facilitating topical discussions between public leaders and writers on a variety of subjects pertaining to the upcoming presidential election. So Krista Tippett, who's a member of our National Advisory Board, is going to come and host a series of discussions. We've got E.J. Dionne and several others on that program. So that's very exciting for us and we'll make sure that gets live-streamed and has a more national presence. We're working with Michael Curry on that and were also going to cosponsor something with him in D.C. after. We're also featuring Jon Meacham in a big public lecture about a week and a half before the elections. So we're sort of called to do a lot around electoral politics in each presidential election.

More germane probably for many of you is that we also publish an online journal about religion and politics at religionandpolitics.org. Our managing editor, Tiffany Stanley, is based in Washington D.C. We have a tiny staff. She's pretty much it with me as the editor kind of doing the final reads of everything and a few student interns fact-checking for us, so it's really quite a tiny operation. Nonetheless, we engage really a pretty diverse array of scholars and journalists and public leaders and have gotten a few awards for that and, you know, hope to expand that as we move forward into the future.

And then for the rest of it, we of course teach students at Wash U and we have developed a minor, a really robust curriculum for undergrads. We hope to move towards a major. We may move towards a graduate program and we have a really robust post-doctoral fellowship program. You will hear from Maryam Kashani at the next panel. She's one of ours and we're very proud to have her as a postdoc here and a lot of other things of this sort.

So you can see why the chance to direct something like this was really appealing to me, especially given our need for understanding religion in the contemporary world. You all know that several universities have research centers devoted to the study of religion. We're not the only one. But our mission of being not only an academic center but also one that speaks to the public about religion and politics—I believe that is fairly unique. We are focused on the U.S., as I've mentioned. I think the Berkley Center and others that do more global issues don't have the same kind of mandate in terms of really focusing on U.S. religion and politics, which we do because of the terms of our gift. It's not necessarily that we chose that, but that was chosen for us to really focus on the US, at least at this early stage of development.

I think we're pretty unique in what we do. We're trying to provide a space for concerned people across many walks of life to debate and work through the full implications of religious freedom and what that term even means today along with debating the best ways of confronting multiple threats to our nation's well-being, whether those be simplistic avowals of the US as a Christian nation to outraged calls for Quran burning. From terrorist violence performed in the name of religion to coercive abuses of power afflicted by religious leaders upon trusted members of their flock. So there's a lot to study and talk about and better understand and fix in our current religion and politics matrix and I think the need for informed debate and public education in these matters of religion and politics has never been greater.

So that's what we're trying to do here and I would love to hear from you what you think we ought to do more of or better. Thank you.

**Audience question:**

What do you see as the role of a center like the Danforth Center when you have a major political candidate like Donald Trump who calls for the exclusion of an entire class of religious persons, that no Muslims should be allowed to come into the United States? What would be the appropriate response? And would you need to deal with the international repercussions of that as well as the domestic?

**Marie Griffith:**

Sure. Well, several of us have written about that. Actually, again I can use your wisdom on this because we do a lot of writing and speaking, talking to journalists when they call us. That's part of what we want to do but, as you all know, there's a lot of noise out there and so getting a message out—you are all probably much more the experts on that than the scholars I hang out with are. So we have certainly spoken about this. And, you know, I think we have had events on campus focused on Islamophobia. There are ways that we certainly want to and can respond.

At the same time, what's different about us is we're scholars and teachers. You know, part of why we don't get more scholars from the university in here all day for something like this is that we're teaching. We're off in the classroom. It's the last week of classes. We've got student panicked about their papers. And also the research of scholars is kind of the longer-term thing, right? And we're slow compared to what journalists are able to do. So that's our challenge sometimes. Trying to respond quickly in a way that feel right for us. Scholars aren't always so good at that.

As to the statements by Trump, everyone in my field thinks it's absolutely horrific. I think about it what I'm sure you think about it. It's outrageous and we've tried to speak in terms about our own democratic principles and our own long tolerance and everything else to say this is absolutely un-American. I mean, that's not a term I often use but, you know, where that's effective I would certainly make that argument.

**Audience question:**

The thing I love about *Religion and Politics*, the journal, is that it does try to bridge this gap between journalistic writing and academic writing. So I'm wondering if you could just talk about since the launch of the journal, how you guys have found the ease of that, you know, the journalistic and academic sort of back and forth.

**Marie Griffith:**

Sure. So it's interesting. So I, of course, trained as a scholar, not a journalist. Our Managing Editor Tiffany Stanley is trained as a journalist. She has a Master's degree in religious studies from the Harvard Divinity School so she's very well trained. And so when we first started working together, when I hired her as the managing editor and we then had another assistant editor working with us too, it was challenging because, you know, she and I realized we thought about it very differently. And that has not always been a comfortable process. It would be interesting to hear her describe from her vantage sort of what that's been like. And, you know, oftentimes scholars and journalists don't work together for these very reasons that the models are so different for how you do this work. But over time, I think what we've done to balance it is we get a lot of journalists writing for us and we get a lot of scholars writing for us and we developed pretty early on the genres that we wanted to use, the kind of general length of pieces that we would accept, the ways that we would code different sorts of essays and reports and other sorts of things. And so we've got journalists focused in some of those areas more and scholars focused on some of those areas more. The scholars tend to do more of the long historical trajectory that led up to something like the Donald Trump statement on Muslims, but our journalists are there when we want to respond

quickly to things. And now, you know, Tiffany has been out there long enough and is well networked I think, you know people come to us also, which is very helpful when something happens and they are able to turn something over quickly. We've asked out scholars to turn things over quickly at times and sometimes they've said they would and it's very hard for them to do that. It's very hard for me to do that. So it's been very helpful and I think we've been effective. I love people's critiques of it too but I think we've been trying to do both and it works out well.

**Audience question:**

Before coming here, I checked through your events list and things like that and I see very little representation or investigation into the experience of nonreligious people and humanists in American public life.

**Marie Griffith:**

Oh no, I don't think that's true.

**Audience question:**

I'm wondering how you ensure that that voice is at the table in your interfaith panels, in the speakers that you're inviting.

**Marie Griffith:**

Yes. So, well, my husband, who also happens to be on the faculty there, Leigh Schmidt, has just finished a book called *Village Atheists*.

**Audience question:**

I take his class.

**Marie Griffith:**

Oh yes, I think he's mentioned you. So you know he teaches classes. It's true that he's kind of the representative of that in some way. Now, when you ask me about events and who we've brought in for speakers, then I think I see your point because I think that we have probably not had speakers in quite the same way, although George Will is certainly a devout secularist but he did not talk at length about that when he came to speak to us. And, of course, folks who are religious like him very much and assume he's one of them. So you're right. I think in terms of our events we can do better with that. But in terms of our courses, Leigh's book, he's got the page proofs right now. He's going over it, so it's going to be published in early September I think. And that'll be a big deal and we're going to do a celebration and book thing and all of that. So I think that will give us more presence also.

**Audience question:**

One of the characteristics of US political and religious life is that nonreligious people are, in fact, highly underrepresented in politics and are seen very poorly by their fellow Americans. Is that something that you've addressed? I know that you brought Rabbi Jonathan Sacks here. He's said very denigrating, discriminatory things about atheists in his public speaking and writing. Is that addressed in a manner of dignity for a whole group of people?

**Marie Griffith:**

Yes, well, we mostly address what people choose to talk about and he didn't choose to talk about that. He mostly addressed the Jewish community when he came to campus in a couple of smaller gatherings. So that was sort of its own specific kind of event. But yeah, I take your point that I think we can probably do better with that. I'm going to go home and tell Leigh that he's got to do better with that. I'm going to put it on him. Yeah, I'll tell him that you raised the question. We did do a piece on Bernie Sanders where we focused on lack of religion. It's in our journal.

**Audience question:**

You mentioned a few things that were really interesting to me and my research. You mentioned pluralism and democratic values of a society and how to bring those to harmony or seek a space for both. And the other one was finding a common ground among different worldviews that are animating debates. What is your approach to that? I see a lot of sociological work. Do you characterize it more along those lines?

Marie Griffith:

Sure. Yeah, I'm definitely not a philosopher. I mean I'm a historian ethnographer, you know, who really looks at it that way. So I am very interested, as you'll hear this afternoon, in looking at historical examples of people who managed to do that, right? Whereas I think journalists that I very much admire find contemporary people who have managed to do that and interview them. So I think it would be closer to that, but to kind of take a "lived religion" approach to that. However, I very much appreciate the philosophical thinkers who are sort of theorizing better ways of doing that in the public sphere and I'm very interested in those debates. Jeff Stout was my colleague at Princeton and Eric Gregory and there are a number of people whose writings I read and try to absorb and think very deeply about who I think go right along with this sort of culture-based model. But as to who I am is much more on the historical side.

# Panel 3: Assimilation or Confrontation?

The Muslim Experience in Europe, the United States, and Beyond



Moderator: Tom Hundley  
Senior Editor, Pulitzer Center

Okay, on to our third panel. I see a few new faces, so I'll introduce myself. I am Tom Hundley from the Pulitzer Center, and I will also mention that we have a newsletter that you can sign up for at [pulitzercenter.org](http://pulitzercenter.org). The title of our panel is "Assimilation or Confrontation: The Muslim Experience in Europe, The United States and Beyond." This is a topic straight out of today's headline, from the recent terror attacks to the overheated political rhetoric in this country, and the flood of refugees to Europe from Syria. A radicalized minority and a trickle of recruits to jihadist organizations make for sensational headlines, but mainstream Islam is seeking ways to accommodate itself in societies that continue to view Islamic people with suspicion.

We have a distinguished panel here.

John Bowen is the Dunbar Van-Cleve professor of Arts & Sciences at Washington University. He is an anthropologist and his research focuses on comparative Islamic practices across the world. His own ethnographic studies have taken him to Indonesia, France and England but he has worked with students across Europe and Asia, the Middle East and Africa. He is the

author of an excellent little book, *Blaming Islam*, which is about some of the myths and misconceptions of Muslim integration into Western societies, and he will be talking to us about some of the Islamic adaptations that we never hear about.

Geneive Abdo is a Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, but before that she was at the Stimson Center and the Brookings Institution. She has also had a long and distinguished career as a foreign correspondent, mainly in the Middle East and Muslim world. She was the Iran correspondent for *The Guardian* and a regular contributor to *The Economist* and *International Herald-Tribune*. She was the first American journalist to be based in Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and she is the author of several books. The latest [book by her] focuses on the Shia/Sunni conflict and the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and it will be published by the Oxford University Press later this year. She will talk to us about the growing religiosity among Muslim youth in America and why this does not necessarily lead to radicalization.

Sherria Ayuandini is a PhD candidate in Medical Anthropology

and is currently pursuing a dual degree with Washington University and the University of Amsterdam. Her research on hymen reconstructive surgery in the Netherlands has given her insight into the world of younger and older women of Iraqi, Turkish, Iranian and Afghani background. Her research obviously touches on many of the issues in the public debate on migrants in Europe. This afternoon, Sherria will be talking to us about how young Muslim women are navigating competing sexual norms in The Netherlands.

Nick Street is a senior writer at the Southern California Center for Religion and Civic Culture. He studied religion and ethics at Oberlin College and at the Candler School of Theology at Emory. After working nearly a decade as an editor in the world of scholarly publishing he returned to grad school at USC, where he received an MA in journalism. He writes on religion, science, sexuality, the media and culture. His work has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *LA Weekly* and many other places. Nick was in Europe last year on a grant from the Pulitzer Center, writing on how second-generation Muslims tend to be overlooked in mainstream news coverage, and how this distorts our perception of places such as Brussels.

Finally, we have Maryam Kashani. Maryam has a doctorate in Social Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin. Her research and filmmaking are organized around the centrality of visual culture to Muslim everyday life, and its relation to questions of morality and politics and social justice. Her dissertation, "Seekers of Sacred Knowledge: Zaytuna College and the Education of American Muslims" was based on a year and a half of fieldwork conducted at Zaytuna College, an emergent liberal arts college that was established in 2009 in Berkeley, California. She is a post-doctoral fellow here at Washington University, and she will talk to us about American-Muslim institution building and activism within the current political landscape.

**John Bowen**  
Professor, Department of Anthropology,  
Washington University

It is a pleasure to be here, and what Tom said is very important. Of course, the media's interest has been overwhelmingly focused on jihad. How do you find who is going to be the next jihadi? And basically anybody who looks at this stuff says, "I don't know, it could be anybody." And what they ignore are certain things that Muslims are doing that don't have to do with jihad at all. Those things don't sell papers, but you should make sure those papers are sold, those of you who are in the media. I just want to touch on three points very briefly.

I think it is the best thing on integration in North America and Western Europe. They argue, quite rightly, that assimilation always has value overtones. It is almost always uni-directional; it is hard to think of assimilation that goes both ways. So there is a hidden agenda behind it, behind even the use of the term "assimilation," no matter how many caveats you build into it. So they prefer, and I would too, the term "integration." They use it to mean something like equal opportunity and equal respect. That seems to be pretty good, to talk about the course of integration. And here, of course, it shifts a bit, the issues. Because the issues have to do with people who have immigrated recently to places like North America or Western Europe. They might be Muslims, or they might be other people. They might be not practicing at all, but be labeled as Muslims by other

people. And that is not because Islam is necessarily front and center, but maybe it is their characteristics. It could be their race, it could be something else. It could be their class, their status, their command of language, or lack of such a command. But it is causing problems with integration and causing racial discrimination.

The first has to do with integration versus assimilation. There is a great book that just came out about integration—you all should read it—by Richard Alba and Nancy Foner, called *Strangers No More*.

So if you focused on integration rather than assimilation, on equal access and equal respect, then the questions you ask change. I follow France and Britain most closely, a few other countries a little less closely, but the latest study on the French situation says that if you look at assimilation and you mean things like intermarriage and the use of French by the second generation, people who are being labeled as Muslims in France are doing very, very well. They are doing better than, say, is the case in Great Britain or in many other countries. By those measures, right? But if you look at integration in terms of people getting jobs, people not facing discrimination, they are doing terribly. In fact they seem to be—although the French government does its best to prevent people from getting access to good data—you will see that they are doing much worse in France than in Great Britain.

Some of this gets covered over by talking about the faults of Muslims, by giving cultural explanations or religious explanations if they have differences in behavior patterns, but that is not very useful, or very true. Especially when you are talking about the second part, on integration.

So I want to talk about immigrants and people who, for reasons probably because of their race, maybe the racial differences, many think that this is under-analyzed in a European competition, they really ought to start by focusing on discrimination and their access to housing and the employment sector.

The second thing I want to briefly touch on is spatial concentration and what we make of it. There is sort of an unspoken assumption that anytime you have a neighborhood with more than random concentration of other people—blacks, Spanish-speakers, Muslims, whatever—that means you have got a problem. That is very interesting. We don't talk very much about why that is a problem. And there are certain cases, for American anthropologists, historians, sociologists and many others, our reference point is usually African-American experience in large urban centers. Especially William Julius Wilson's great works

on the city of Chicago and what he called "the concentration effects." You all know the argument, that African-Americans, as some start to do better, have good professions, good jobs, they start to move out to the suburbs and the people who are left behind

don't have any role models anymore on how to get ahead. And in that case, it seemed to be a very good analysis, because of the pernicious policies of forced segregation that African-Americans faced, and continue to face either directly or indirectly, in places like where we are standing and sitting right now. But this does not mean that concentration is always necessarily a bad thing, and if you look at the ways that different ethnic groups sort of settled in the US, there is also an effect of concentration, which is to form bonds, form social cohesions, social networks that allow people to get ahead, and anyone who saw the movie *Brooklyn* saw this, in a very sort of newsy way. People who may not share

very much, but once they are in the US or are in France or in someplace else, they can start to do that. So I think we need to be somewhat agnostic as to whether or not concentration itself is always such a bad thing.

In Britain, the rhetoric has been much as here, that anytime you find a bunch of Muslims together, that is bad. Of course, we are reading about this every day in respect to Molenbeek and several other neighborhoods in Brussels, but if anyone should happen to read Ian Buruma's piece on Brussels in *The New York Review of Books* around four issues ago, where he said the thing about Brussels is that everything is so close to each other that the fancy street leads right away, leads right into Mullenbach within the space of a couple kilometers, so things are not as if we have got things that are vast and are separating new immigrants, labeled "Muslims," from others. But that seems to be the default assumption, that concentration is bad. Certainly in British studies it is assumed to be as well. And *The Economist*, interestingly enough, *The Economist*, of all places and people, wrote a really interesting piece about a year ago, which looked at different groups in Britain. And they said, "we have good data," and they said that the only group who has had a pronounced uptick, both in school exams and in wages, are Bangladeshis, and Bangladeshis have always been at the bottom of the pack, in terms of statistics in both of those issues.

They speculate, and I will tell you why they do, that the reason is because of positive concentration effects. That the Bangladeshis live with each other, that they tend to come from the district of Sylhet, Bangladesh, they seem to be happy to be living together and there is a great deal of social capital there. After a while, after several generations, it was possible to start using that social capital to do things as they have in Tower Hamlets, that is the great concentration in East London, to build what we would call here charter schools or independent schools. And they are not only pooling their resources, but also parental support for education is a huge factor in getting children to take school seriously, and it is now starting to pay off. Also in setting up apprenticeship programs and training programs themselves. Which may explain the uptick in salaries, and the closing of the salary gap. So it is a case where concentration may be a good thing. This sounds like a technical point, but it seems to be our reflex action whenever we are talking about places in Europe or North America.

Finally, I want to address something which is that lost in all the writing, the French scholarly writing. There have been maybe half a dozen decent books published already this year about Muslims in Europe, and it's either about the great religion or the terrible religion, Islam as a religion of peace or Islam is a gutter religion. It is one or the other, and some of the authors write that yes, it is a great religion, except it needs me, the Martin Luther of the Islamic faith, to make it right. But lost in all this is any writing about what Muslims are doing now to create a life in France. For praying, for having the right kind of food or having good schools, for educating their kids in what Islam really is and not the jihadi version. There is a lot of that going on, but it is being completely ignored by French scholars, because it is not really the thing that French people are really worried about.

That would be one point to make about what Muslims are doing in places like France or Britain, is what they are doing is just being ignored. The second point is that they are working hand in hand with a wide range of government officials. Now, the stereotype of France tends to be the country of *laïcité*, the land of secularity, very secular, so that the state has a hands-off relationship with religious groups. But actually, it is a nation



that exchanges support for control. It has always been very hands-on in respect to religion. Telling Muslims where they can and cannot pray, and often building the facilities that Muslims need so as to properly pray.

So, for example, one of the problems Muslims have in one of the urban parts of Paris is on the feast day called Eid al-Adha, where you perform a sacrifice. And you are supposed to have some food from an animal that has been killed after the early Morning Prayer on that day. So it is usually a logistical challenge, because the sheep are where the Muslims aren't. Sheep are out in the country, Muslims are in the middle of the city, so for decades there have been very intense collaborative efforts, between various ministers and health services, various mosque officials, licensed sacrificers, people who can kill the animals in an Islamic and proper way, and large department store chains. One of the better examples is that one of the larger department stores devoted its distribution networks and its parking lots to the rapid killing of sheep on the morning of Eid al-Adha several years ago. And of course this was a very nice public-private partnership that never makes the media because it doesn't fit our stereotype of France, that the state is against religion. The state of France actually tries to make conditions possible for Muslims, Jews, Christians and others to practice their religion as they see fit.

A second example is that about a third of parents in France, at one time or another, send their kids to a private religious school, which is almost always Catholic, and the teachers at those schools are paid for by the state. They are civil servants. Again, this is not separation of church and state, so Muslims have started to play this game and a few have already gotten these contracts with the state to have Islamic schools that teach the national curriculum, but are largely for Islamic children and are

taught by Muslims, and there is an Islamic ambience to them. And they are located in places where Muslims are living, and those have state support. So it sounds like things are great, and Muslims and the state are working hand in hand. But there is still a very strong racist basis in public policy all over Europe, and I would say especially France, and of course it is growing in all of these countries. In France, these efforts to form these schools are consistently held back by members of the Education Ministry, high-placed members of the Education Ministry, who don't think that there should be Islamic schools at all. The challenge for some of these countries is just to be consistent in their principles, to treat Muslims the way they treat members of other religious faiths. So there is a lot going on that will allow for, not assimilation, but adaptation of the kinds of institutions that Muslims have to the culture in which they are now living.

I will end with a somewhat trivial but nonetheless important example that shows how Muslims thinking in very traditional ways and in very traditionalist ways, can be a force for adaptation. There was an argument by a group in 1999 headed by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who the U.S. thinks is a pro-suicide bomber Muslim jihadi. And this group was asked by many folks who can't afford

to buy houses outright—and there are no Islamic banks—so what should they do?

And the group said, “Well, you know, there is a prohibition on interest, so you shouldn't be using regular interest-charging banks, but the principles of Sharia Law say that protecting religion and protecting the religious family are important objectives. So in situations of emergency, you can have exemptions to this rule. So we decree that in Europe, where if you need to go to a bank, and pay interest on money to buy your first home, it will help religion and help the family, so you are exempted from that prohibition on paying interest.”

There was a big debate about this, of course, but it is a fairly creative adaptation along traditionalist lines, not deviating terribly from traditional Islamic scholarship, that allows Muslims to fit in. This is what Catholics have done, this is what Jews have done, it is what all new groups do when they have to figure out new situations. They figure out ways to use their traditions in ways that will allow them to fit in. Muslims ought to be given the same respect as other groups.



Nick Street, Sherria Ayuandini, and Geneive Abdo

**Geneive Abdo**  
Nonresident senior fellow, The Atlantic Council

Hello and good afternoon. I am so honored to be here with the Pulitzer Center, and thank you for that very generous introduction. Most of us on this panel will be talking about Muslims in America, so I am going to try and confine my remarks through a very specific prism through which I did research in the United States in 2006, which resulted in a book that was published with the title of *Mecca and Main Street*. Not my title, but Oxford's. Because I had spent many years, a decade actually, in the Islamic world and Arab countries, and returned here, it was very clear to me that a similar process was going on

in the United States as had been going on in Egypt and Tunisia and many other countries, which was sort of the Islamization of societies. And although in America we tend to associate growing religiosity with extremism, that there is very little coordination between these two things. So I set out to do research with a very specific purpose, which was to document the growing religiosity among second-generation Muslims.

And just like in a country such as Egypt, what was very fascinating to me was that while the first generation in the United States,

while their parents were much more secular, for a variety of reasons that are totally different than in the United States, they emerged out of an era of Arab nationalism, of secularism and in a world where Islamist groups were not really a part of the political process. They just weren't politically active in the 1970's or 80's, but it was those parents, and that generation that immigrated to the United States. So even though they brought back with them a very secular orientation, their children became much more religious, and not only more religious, but much more in tune to their parents' countries of origin. They began learning Arabic or Urdu, something that was not the American experience of their parents. I found that very interesting, so let me just begin by saying, and I think the larger point in this—the reason we should even research the subject—is for a lot of different reasons that many speakers before me have raised today, which is that there is very much a connection between what is local and what is global.

That is something that Americans don't understand, because we tend to view the subject as, "Well these are Americans, so why don't they behave as Americans?" So we hold them up to standards that are a bit different from the experience of other ethnic groups. I have always thought that a book should be written, a comparative analysis of how Christian Arabs immigrated versus Muslim Arabs. My own family comes from Lebanon, we are Maronite Christians, and our whole history of immigration and integration and assimilation is completely different from the Muslim experience. So it would be a very fascinating study to pose some questions. Is it because Islam is different? Is it because Americans view Islam and Christianity differently, so that in America there have been completely different experiences between, say, Christian Arabs and Muslim Arabs? But anyways, that is for another topic.

Let me just begin by giving you some basic information about the Muslim community in the United States. If you are interested in any data about Muslims in America, I recommend the research from the Pew Forum. They have done extensive polling on this topic, beginning in 2007. They are a non-profit, they are non-biased, and I find their polling to be extremely accurate and true to what one might find as a researcher in the field. So Pew sets the number at 3 million Muslims in the United States. The Muslim community themselves believe that this is kind of an understatement. Even Islamic scholars such as John Esposito and other scholars of Islamic Studies believe that the figure is actually closer to 6 million. Over the years, and particularly during these periods of controversy—not only 9/11, but also during the presidential election—this number is increasingly politicized. It is hard to know exactly how many Muslims are in the United States, because when a census is conducted, religion cannot be asked as a question. So scientifically, it is difficult. But the number is probably somewhere between 3 million, according to Pew, and the 6 million estimate commonly found among Islamic scholars. The Muslim community comes from 77 different countries, so it is a very diverse community. There are more Arab Muslims than Pakistanis, but Pakistan is the largest country of origin.

Another interesting fact is that most foreign-born Muslims came to the United States during the 1990s or beyond, in response to changes enacted with the 1965 Immigration Act. Most Muslims in this country before the 1960s were African-Americans. The act enacted during the Johnson administration changed this dynamic completely, so that beginning in the 1960s there are many more Muslims coming from Islamic countries.

People in the 1960s came here to get their PhDs or to study, and they came with a very secularist-oriented perspective, because they had emerged from the nationalistic movements that had existed in many of their countries of origin. I think that another important statistic is that the Muslim population now is much younger, on average, than the non-Muslim population. So the survey that Pew did found that 59% of adult Muslims are between the ages of 18 and 29, compared with 40% of adults in the general public who fall within that age range. The reason, I think, that some of these statistics are important is because, to some degree, it adds to this perception of younger Muslims being a threat factor. You know, if you go, and as I mentioned, many younger Muslims are becoming more religious, and more young girls are wearing headscarves, more Islamic schools are being built, the figure for mosques now, the generally accepted number is that there are about 2,500 mosques now in the United States, which is a big increase since 9/11. I believe that the number is actually much higher. There are Muslim student associations on nearly every campus in America. There is every sign that young Muslims, or at least those who are religious, are identifying more with Islam. And although, in my view, this is a positive thing, because it addresses this issue of how you can assimilate and integrate while also being true to your own identity. So I think that in a sense, the younger Muslim population that is religious has done a great job in creating these institutions and creating these organizations, while still being highly educated, having earning power equivalent to most Americans, according to statistics, and they obviously do not live in ghettos.

If you go to any community in the United States, Muslims are living in completely integrated communities with Americans, which is not true in most parts of Europe. I think that what the younger generation has done, which is worth noting, is that they have tried to balance these two very competing and conflicting existences. That has, I think brought a lot of challenges for them. And it has been difficult, as I explained, for them to explain how being religious doesn't mean that they are al-Qaeda sympathizers. I will just refer you to another important statistic that was conducted by the Pew Forum about assimilation issues. It is a poll from 2011, and it asks Muslims whether they want to assimilate or not. Do they want to adopt American customs and ways of life? In 2011, 56% said "Yes." The poll was not done in any previous years, so it's hard to have any kind of comparison, but I think that that is a very telling statistic. That it also speaks to the challenges they face is obvious, as we know from the presidential campaign. And again, I think that because they are expressing this religiosity in a very open way, it becomes a sort of challenge for them to combat the accusations from people like Donald Trump, that they should be deported, because we have this kind of blatant expression of Islam in this country.

There is another statistic that I think is very important, and that is the difference between 2011 and 2014 polling regarding extremism and the rise in the number of Muslims in America who said that they were "definitely not" Islamic extremist sympathizers, from 56% in 2011 to 85% in 2014. That is a huge jump. You can see that there has been a huge response from the Muslim community, given the labels that have been placed upon them again, based upon what is happening abroad.

I want to make two last points. One is about religiosity. One of the reasons that Muslims in America have become more religious in this country is because, again, because of this global/local connection. So because of the Internet—and I just recently did a study on social media in Arabic—because of the

Internet, in many cases, although there are obviously imams here in the United States who were educated here, many of the reference points for some American Muslims are actually from abroad and not from the United States. Because there is much more of a grounded religious education abroad, you have influential sheiks in Izhar, even sheiks in Saudi Arabia, in Doha. John mentioned Yusuf Qaradawi, who was immensely influential, although he has become far more radicalized over the last few years, but those are the reference points. So (a) this sort of leads to a religiosity which is not in the American context and (b) it also makes it difficult for American religious scholars to have much influence over this population if their reference points are abroad, in the Middle East and on the Internet. And we are talking about the second generation. So I think that on the other side, that has been one of the challenges for Islamic leadership: how to create legitimate reference points for the younger generations, so that they are listening to American educated religious scholars, American-educated sheiks, and not Yusuf Qaradawi in Doha. And again, because this is the case to some degree, this has opened them up to criticism and to unwarranted labeling that somehow they are tied to Islamic radical groups abroad.

On a related point—and one that I would like to end on, although I am always a bit cautious in saying this—I think part of the problem also is that the Muslim community itself has not done a great job in going beyond the arguments that were presented after 9/11. You know, the argument one being “This has nothing to do with Islam,” “this” being the extremism. Or argument two, that “Islam is a religion of peace.” And I think that if we even look at some of the speakers that we now see continuously on television, some of the leaders of Islamic organizations, they have not, I believe, moved the needle of the American side, of trying to educate the American public on different interpretations of Islam. So you can dismiss extremists and say, “this has nothing to do with Islam,” but obviously many millions of people in various parts of the world think that it very much has to do with Islam. So this is an internal Islamic debate. It is not our debate, it is an internal debate within the Islamic world, but I think that some in the Muslim American community here, and some of its leadership, have not addressed the tough questions head on.

This has, I think, contributed to, the perpetuation of the Donald Trump narrative. I remember during my years of research in areas such as Dearborn, Michigan, I spent a lot of time in mosques. When just normal Americans came to these mosques for Ramadan, or Open House, as many of the mosques have, even in a very, very conservative mosque in Dearborn where I spent a lot of time researching one chapter of my book, these are people who are coming to pray, and they are wearing tunics; all the women are veiled, the women aren’t allowed to talk to the men, they sit secluded in a second floor prayer room. I wasn’t allowed to enter in the front door, I had to enter through the alley, as most women do. It is a very conservative mosque. It is recreating the village. Even in this mosque, when they used to have Open House, and Americans went and they got a lecture by a very conservative imam, views completely changed. They understood that these people are very religious, they understood that they were culturally conservative, but they didn’t consider them extremists. So even though there has been a lot of outreach by the Muslim American community, the discussion on the political and intellectual level needs to move beyond the same and rather simplistic arguments that were made after 9/11.

Sherria Ayuandini  
Department of Anthropology,  
Washington University



Good afternoon. My name is Sherria Ayuandini, and as Tom has mentioned, I am a medical anthropologist here in Washington University, and I am also doing a dual degree with the University of Amsterdam.

My study is on the surgery called hymenoplasty. So hymenoplasty is a surgery to alter the shape of the hymen membrane. The hymen membrane itself is a membrane that is located within the vaginal canal and that, in its intact position, is widely believed to be the sign of a virgin. So hymenoplasty is most widely known as the “re-virgination” surgery. I do my study in the Netherlands, and what I do is I sit in on consultations between doctors and patients. This is unprecedented access because, as you could imagine, the women who are getting this operation do not want anyone else to know that they are getting the surgery. So I was very fortunate to be able to get this access. So I sit in during consultations, and then I follow up with the patients afterwards, if they give me consent to talk to them. I also talk to physicians all over the Netherlands, who are involved in the provision of the surgery, and I also talk to people with similar ancestry with the patients. This includes young men, young women, older women and older men—particularly on topics of virginity and sexuality. To get a bit of an idea of the understanding that might be the motivations of women seeking the operation.

I mentioned that I talked with people who had similar ancestry as the patients, and the reason is because women who are getting these operations tend to come almost exclusively from immigrant backgrounds. So they are Dutch women, but they have immigrant backgrounds. What that means is that they came to the Netherlands when they were really, really young, or, more commonly, their parents or grandparents migrated from places like Morocco, Turkey and more recently Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. But on the other hand, the physicians, the doctors who are providing these operations, they are almost exclusively the other way around. They are of Dutch background, or Dutch native background. So right off the bat, we see a contrast here between the provider of hymenoplasty and the seeker of the operation. So hymenoplasty is really a good lens to look at, if we want to call it “integration” or “assimilation of newcomers” in the Netherlands. Particularly on how it is translated in terms

of day-to-day interactions and the institutional context of medicine, and hymenoplasty.

How does hymenoplasty exactly illuminate the differences between the newcomers and the Dutch native people in the Netherlands? The most intuitive way is to think that these women are now negating two sets of sexual norms. The Netherlands tend to be a little bit more open about sexuality, including premarital sex, while the social circle of these women are probably less so. Now this is undoubtedly true, but if we only see it that way, I would say that is probably a little bit too one dimensional. Because as we all know, young people all over the world do engage in premarital sex and relations, no matter what country they're in. So simply thinking that Dutch young people of immigrant backgrounds are now having premarital sex because they are now in the Netherlands is a little bit too simplistic. But there is something to say about the public setup in the Netherlands. Sexuality is public in The Netherlands. The display of sexuality is pretty much out there in the open, starting with the infamous red-light district, for example, where sex workers are literally on display, to popular culture, such as movies and reality shows, where sexuality is always an integral part, to advertisements and public spaces, be it parks or beaches, where sexual tension and being scantily clad are pretty much out there in the open for everyone to observe.

I am not saying that because of this situation, young people are more encouraged to engage in premarital sex. What I am saying is that there is an image about the Netherlands that is mediated through all these public images that we can see, and the image is that Dutch society and being in the Netherlands means being open to premarital sexuality. And both patients and doctors have this image in their head. So when a patient comes in to meet with the doctor, contemplating the surgery, she is already bringing a contrast to that meeting. Because in a country where premarital sexual intimacy is pretty much accepted, coming in and saying, "I want to go under the knife and alter a very intimate part of my body to be able to appear as a virgin in my wedding day," there is already a contrast there. When she is meeting the doctor in this way, she is very much aware that the doctor is of Dutch background and she realizes that most Dutch people would not want this surgery, because they are open to premarital sexual intimacy. So in her head, the patient thinks that she needs the approval of the doctor, and thus approval of Dutch society in general. And that means that when she first meets with the doctor, the first thing that she is going to do is talk about justification. Why she wants the operation. So this justification includes the reasons for getting the surgery, how did she lose her virginity, to whom, why she can't tell people that she is not a virgin, or even why she would not marry someone else who would accept that she is no longer a virgin. So she is

not only justifying why she is getting the operation. She also needs to justify why she can't do all of these other choices that wouldn't require resort to surgery.

So hymenoplasty highlights these differences not only in the sense how newcomers and natively Dutch people differ in terms of okay or not okay with premarital sex, but also in this entire set of social decision-making where Dutch people of native descent are able to do, but Dutch people of immigrant background might not be able to do, or don't want to do. And this is where I am going to bring up religion. I have not talked about religion up to this point.

The fact of the matter is that about 80% of all the women who are looking for this operation do come from an Islamic background. Not every one of them is Muslim, but the overwhelming majority of them are. And the patients are quite aware of these commonalities. So when they are talking to doctors, knowing that their operation might be met with disapproval, there is the possibility that something will be blamed—because if you are getting this operation it means you are seen as undesirable. Now interestingly, when this is the case, they make sure that the things that get blamed would not be their religion. So patients who are getting hymenoplasty often try to defend their religion and try to distance their religion from hymenoplasty, and in this case, Islam. So they will talk to the doctor, often without being prompted, about why Islam has nothing to do with hymenoplasty. And most of the time they do this by saying that in the Qur'an, there is no stipulation of having to bleed during the first penetration, because usually that is why you want to get the operation, because you want to bleed during your first contact with your lawfully wedded husband. So they will point out that there is no requirement of bleeding in the Qur'an. Then, on top of that, they would offer a different culprit, so that religion would not be blamed. That culprit would be culture, whatever culture means.

So we see something interesting here, because hymenoplasty in a sense kind of solidifies differences that might not otherwise be there, because individual Dutch people have said and have talked to me anecdotally or in a more public space, that sexuality is not a part of their life. So they are not particularly sexual, just because they are Dutch. Or the other way around: Muslim people in the Netherlands don't necessarily repress their sexuality or have to be virgins before marriage. But hymenoplasty makes that contrast even more visible. So, I am just going to leave it there. This is obviously a very complex issue, but I just want to highlight how interesting it is that these patients feel that they are different and that there are some things to be blamed for being different—but they want to make sure that it is not their religion that is being blamed in this sense.



Nick Shindo Street

Nick Shindo Street  
University of Southern California

So last week, I was at the Journalism School at the University of Mississippi giving a presentation about my work at the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at USC, and my host advised me that in order to communicate with undergraduates, I would need to do a PowerPoint. So I just happen to have handy, and again, keeping with one of the running themes of our conversation here, I have adapted my PowerPoint for this particular presentation.

Thank you first to the Pulitzer Center and to Luce and Washington University for giving me this chance to give you a little bit of information about my work, and for your support as well. I guess if there is going to be a running theme of what I am about to present to you, it will be TMI: too much information. I am just going to tell you a little bit about who I am and what I do and how I got into this particular line of inquiry in my work as a journalist.

So, this is the Women's Mosque of America, which I covered for Al Jazeera America about a year ago, and a number of strands of my work converge here. I have sort of three main strands of reporting that I work on. The first is Pentecostalism in the developing world—that is sort of yesterday's news, probably about two years ago. More recently, I have been working on religious disaffiliation in the US. So religious "nones," not the ones with habits, but the ones with no habits at all. And also the religious innovations by Muslims in the US and Europe. A couple of interesting things about the Women's Mosque of America. If you will notice in the upper-right hand corner you will see a religious symbol that you might not expect in this particular image. It is a Star of David, and the building that this particular group meets in is called the Pico Union Project. Pico Union was built as a synagogue in 1905; the committee that built the synagogue moved farther west into Los Angeles as the city grew. It was a Presbyterian Church for about 80 years and [the] guy who is sort of a secular, left-wing Jew bought the building so that it didn't get razed, and now it is sort of a multi-purpose and multi-faith building. It houses an LGBT congregation, several small Pentecostal groups, and the Women's Mosque of America. The thing that is interesting to me about the Women's Mosque of America is that there is both innovation and authenticity when they describe what they do. On the one hand, in order to justify what they do in terms of Islamic culture and faith in southern California, there are references to women's mosques going back several hundred years, in particularly in China. But at the same time, this particular community

"The Other Muslim Fringe" in the U.S. and Europe

Women's Mosque of America, Los Angeles

Newsweek  
**MUSLIM RAGE**

The Sun  
**MUSLIM CONVERT BEHEADS WOMAN IN GARDEN**

NEW YORK POST  
**MUSLIM KILLERS**

**Growth of Overt Homosexuality In City Provokes Wide Concern**  
By ROBERT C. DOTY  
The problem of homosexual and restaurants that cater to...  
The liquor authority announced the revocation of the liquor licenses of two more...  
Michael J. Murphy said: "Homosexuality is another one of the many problems confronting law enforcement in this city. However, the under-

**PERVERTS CALLED GOVERNMENT PERIL**  
GABRIELSON, G.O.P. CHIEF, SAYS THEY ARE AS DANGEROUS AS REDS—TRUMAN'S TRIP HIT

**BEGIN PURGING STATE DEPT. OF HOMOSEXUALS**  
BY WILLIAM MOORE  
Washington, April 25—A senate appropriations subcommittee today began the task of ridding the state department of homosexuals.

Violent Extremist Groups Are Tiny Minorities within Islam

Group	Population	Percentage
Muslim population	1.6 billion	-
Al-Qaeda	20,000	(0.000001%)
Taliban	30,000	(0.00025%)
ISIS	80,000 - 100,000 est.	(0.00025%)

Nick Street's presentation

is non-sectarian. It is meant to be an open space, very much along the lines of the Inclusive Mosque Initiative in the UK.

So what is a white, Southern Baptist, Buddhist-convert guy doing covering this? And just to give you a sense of that, let's start off with this. So, as we heard from Geneive and John Bowen and a couple of other folks, there is sort of a media narrative that goes against the grain of what Muslims do in their day-to-day life. I mean, in my own reporting, I specifically heard from young Muslims that what they see in the news does not reflect who they are. And I have heard it often enough to make me believe it pretty strongly. My running joke about the difference between journalism and sociology is that journalists make very broad generalizations from very small data sets. But if you are sort of interested in the hard data about the nature of western news media coverage of Islam, there is a group called Media Tenor in the UK that actually has—I can't imagine coming up with this kind of algorithm—but they can kind of characterize the tone by using keywords about coverage of Muslims and Islam in Western media over the past two decades. And they have something like 6 million headlines that they have analyzed, and indeed, yes, coverage of Islam and Muslims is overwhelmingly negative.

So again, why am I attracted to this? What is pulling me into this? I also happen to be gay, and there is a long history in the US of negative media reportage on gay people. And this obviously goes back to the 1950's and 1960's, but as a middle-aged man I am also very familiar with this. As an undergraduate at Oberlin in 1986-87, I just happened to be watching the local news in the student union, and a piece came on about the demographics of HIV infection. And the lead-in that the anchor gave to the reporter before the toss was something like, "We have all heard that AIDS or HIV afflicts IV drug users and homosexuals," and the toss was, "And then there are the innocent victims." And I thought, "I am very, very, quite familiar with this particular news phenomenon. This affects me pretty directly. So what does that mean, practically speaking?" Now that I am following this thread, this is going to pick up on something that Professor Bowen has mentioned. We can see from this particular graphic the organizations that receive the most coverage in our news headline: ISIS, Taliban, al-Qaeda and you could even throw Boko Haram into the mix. These are tiny, tiny percentages of the overall Muslim population. So my curiosity in approaching this project was, "What is the other Muslim fringe?" That would be a more interesting group for me to focus on, the mainstream that sometimes has a difficult time getting its voice heard—both for reasons of internal communication and having to do with the nature of news media coverage.

So for me, an interesting way of approaching shifting the news media narrative would be to find out what the other Muslim fringe—the LGBT people and women, like the women who started the women's mosque, how do these people communicate, and what do their lives look like on the ground? So an interesting case point. Back in December, you may recall that there were two people, a couple, who ended up committing mass murder in San Bernadino, in suburban Southern California. This particular story received wall-to-wall coverage, especially in Southern California, but also nationwide for weeks following these attacks. The interesting thing from my perspective is that the following week, several organizations in Southern California, I think most of the major mosques in Southern California, organized a rally to protest the events in San Bernadino, and to offer support for the victims. The rally itself gathered almost 1,000 people. Most of them came from various Muslim communities around the area, but there were also interfaith supporters. The mayor spoke, as did a number of other local political luminaries. The messages were pretty explicit. Not surprising, you can kind of see a mix of folks in the Muslim community in Southern California. You have people who are observant, people who are secular, people who are coming from all over the world.

San Bernardino shootings, December 2015



Rally Against Violent Extremism, Los Angeles City Hall



Lack of Media Coverage Makes Mainstream Muslims Invisible



Finding Smaller Stories That Tell the Bigger Story



Nick Street's presentation

There was virtually no media coverage of this event at all. In some ways, this was a reflection of news media values. I mean, obviously, San Bernadino and covering San Bernadino was in the public's interest, because it was violence against people in a public space. This rally, like many rallies and the event we are now speaking at right here, don't have the same sort of news-media value. I think that this is in some way a failure on the part of the imagination of journalists like myself. Specifically, who are these boys? I think that Genieve mentioned the supposed perniciousness of young male Muslims who are second generation and are re-discovering their religiosity. If that is so, then there are ready-made stories right in front of our faces, and I think that it is just because of the habits of news media, not just in the US. I am not going to isolate the US, but also Western Europe in particular, not to look for stories that cut against the prevailing narrative. I think that is a profound problem in journalism these days, and in some ways it amplifies the "Clash of Civilizations" narrative that gets us into so much trouble.

So what does that mean in terms of my own work? In looking for the other Muslim fringe in Europe, I was curious and eager to find characters. People whose stories, whose lives, allow us to both see greater depth as to what Islam actually is, who Muslims really are, from parts of the world that we think we know. And it is interesting because one of the things from my perspective that this kind of reporting emphasizes is that there is literally is no such thing as "Islam." I mean, if any of you can run out into the rain and find Islam and bring it in here, I will give you a dollar. But what is out there is a group of people who practice and are engaged in various ritual beliefs and have particular conversations, and on aggregate, we may call them Islam, but what they are in truth is a whole bunch of different people who call themselves Muslims. One of the things that is interesting in my perspective is that you can really see the breadth of what is going on in European Islam. In the upper far right, the woman who is giving us a thumbs-up, a woman who would consider herself very religiously observant, although she doesn't wear a hijab, you can see she is wearing a silver pendant that is locked, and she calls that her hijab. Her name is Jaheda and she is a lesbian, Bangladeshi hip-hop artist who lives in Manchester. The guy in the middle is a secular Muslim, 1.5 generation, who lives in Malmö, Sweden. Kevin Shakeer. He chose the name Kevin because he watched the movie Home Alone when he was a kid and said, "That kid does whatever he wants. I am going to change my name to Kevin." He is active in politics and education policy in Sweden. He calls himself a Trojan horse, which would probably alarm many American media consumers, but by that he means adaptation, along the lines of what John was talking about. He is actually helping members of his own community to realize that they have to learn tolerance towards people who are gay, toward people who are secular Muslims, toward people who are "apostates," if they expect the secular government of Sweden to give them any respect in return. The two women in the upper left hand corner have started a media organization that is meant to highlight arts in the Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa.

The guy on the left is a community organizer in Brussels, part of an organization called European Federation of Muslim Student Organizations. The thing that just kicks my ass about this guy, is that the organization that he works for has 120,000 members all across Europe. They are funded by the EU and by the member countries. You never hear anything about them, but in aggregate there are more people that belong to this one Muslim NGO in Europe than there are in all the other organizations that you read about in the headlines combined. Why don't we ever hear about them? Well, it is because they are not blowing things up. They are not committing the acts that in the Western media we associate with Islam.

The people in the lower center are members of the Inclusive Mosque Initiative in the UK. Like the Women's Mosque in America, it is non-sectarian. They welcome LGBT people. They are a small organization



right now but they influence, basically, all of the young Muslims in Britain. There are quite a few people who have cycled through the Inclusive Mosque Initiative. Finally, the woman on the far right is Judy, who is a French convert to Islam who now works in an organization called the European Network Against Racism. She lives in Belgium, and one of the things that I love about her is that she is challenging the so-called feminist mayor to change the prohibition on women's headscarves. Arguing on feminist grounds, she hasn't had much luck, but she keeps saying, "If this is my body, why can't I cover it?" So it's a fascinating group of people, and this is just from very casually casting a net into the waters. There are literally thousands of stories like this that are not getting told. Telling them, in my view, is a solution to our problem.

**Maryam Kashani**  
**Danforth Center on Religion and Politics,**  
**Washington University**

Thank you to the Pulitzer Center and everyone else for allowing us to be here and to speak. I just want to maybe raise a few questions and put out some things to think about in relationship to other panelists who have preceded me. I want to return to this idea of the dichotomy of assimilation vs. confrontation, and how we can sort of think beyond narratives of good versus bad Muslims, good meaning those who assimilate and bad being those who confront and show some kind of dissent in one way or another. American Muslims live everyday lives in a polarized and highly political landscape, as Nick has just pointed out. So while they are concerned with terrorism and radicalization they're also concerned with issues that have to do with economic and racial justice. How to get an education and getting jobs, sustaining their families and communities and flourishing as human beings. They are also concerned with local and domestic issues—like having access to clean water in Flint, MI, opposing police brutality, restorative justice, voting right, jobs for the formerly incarcerated, and electing the next US president or their local school board. They are also concerned with the impact of efforts to counter violent extremism programs, from surveillance in their mosques and their schools and their student associations to entrapment by the FBI and local police departments; with American foreign policy and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; drones; the refugee crisis; the environment; and the ongoing instability around the world and in their neighborhoods here. So I think they are trying to address these different types of concerns, and they are building institutions, from schools and non-profits, to more media-based institutions like online magazines, podcasts and infrastructure that address,



serve and mobilize their communities while also speaking to a larger American public.

And I think this something—and Nick, I think you are also pointing to this—that the way that Muslims are trying to have conversations among themselves in Europe and the US and the media in a post-9/11 world, where they felt like they had to tell Americans who they were and what they believed, and what they are doing with their time. I think that they have really decided to think about what they are doing in their community and have these conversations amongst themselves. Largely because, even though they were speaking out against terrorism and extreme violence and such things, it did not really feel like people were listening, and people were constantly asking, “Where is the Muslim voice? Where is the Muslim critique of what is going on in the world?” It is there and it has been there. It just seems like people have not been listening. So I think the impulse now is to really sort of build Muslim communities on a local level that can really address these local issues as well as these larger global issues that they are interested in.

So I think some of the more interesting things that have been happening more recently are grassroots movements. For students who don’t necessarily want to join the Muslim Student Association there are other associations on college campuses, as well as on high school campuses, which may be related to their ethnic or racial background or particular political issue. There are media outlets, among them a new magazine that just started online called Ummah Wide, which means basically “community of believers.” That is a global magazine that covers a lot of local issues. A student at the college I did research at, Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California, just started a podcast called American Submitter that is really great. Places like Zaytuna College, which is a small liberal arts college in Northern California that recently got accreditation, are another example of a Muslim institution that is being built in the US. There are actually a number of other colleges and sort of higher-learning institutes that have developed. As well as projects like mosques, which have been really important in developing and institutionalizing American Islam. There are also alternative or third spaces being built for those who may be left “un-mosqued” or for people who do not necessarily feel comfortable in a mosque or don’t have a woman’s only mosque to attend, so there are groups like that.

There are public and social justice oriented organizations. A really interesting one is called “Imam in Chicago,” in the inner city, or “Muslim Action Network,” which runs a health clinic. There is also an Umma clinic in Los Angeles as well. “Imam”

does a concert every year, they do a lot of cultural programming and recently they have been doing work on reclaiming properties on the south side of Chicago for those who have been formerly incarcerated. So basically, they are sort of using land-use laws to claim abandoned homes and then are teaching the formerly incarcerated how to do construction work, and then they work on these buildings and live in them. And then there is also Muslim crowd-funding. Another group has started a sort of “Kickstarter” type thing for specifically Muslim projects.

So I think that a lot of these examples get at how Muslims are not really wanting to participate in a conversation about assimilation versus confrontation, but they are really pushing into sort of thinking what it means to be locally grounded. This doesn’t mean that they still don’t have trans-national interests and connections. I think it is much more nuanced than that, but all these things also happen with a certain consciousness of feeling under threat to a certain extent. I think especially in the political landscape, in terms what is “safe” political activity versus what can potentially be problematic. There is a particular case in Fremont, California where a young man’s father was concerned that he was becoming potentially radicalized and the father, following the instructions of groups like the FBI—who said, “Let us work with you, to help you deal with problems of extreme radicalization”—he reported his son to the FBI. And his son never actually did anything, but now his son is serving 19 years in prison. So I think these concerns are sort of in the background of these other really interesting things that Muslims are doing.

The last thing that I want to talk about is that I think one of the more interesting things that happened post-9/11 is that the Muslims who immigrated to the US really started to understand what their black brothers and sisters have been experiencing for decades and centuries in the US, and a real consciousness was awoken about the racial realities of the US. I think that the emergence of a multi-racial Islam, and of multi-racial communities of Muslims, have actually been a blessing for Muslim communities in this country. As recent immigrants start to learn the narratives of civil rights and freedom struggles in the US, they also gain a sense of how social change happens in this country, in a time where sometimes it seems that social change is actually quite impossible. I think American Muslims are learning these things from their fellow Muslim brothers and sisters, because I do not think that they get it very much from American public schooling, frankly. So they do get these histories and they do get a sense of what is possible in terms of social transformation that is perhaps a little more feasible than what they see happening in much of the world today.

**Audience question:**

Has there been outreach from other groups to Muslims in the community of St. Louis?

**Maryam Kashani:**

I have only been here for two years, and I actually do not drive in St. Louis, so my actual exposure to Muslim communities here has been pretty limited. I do know that there is a lot of interfaith work, and I think there is a group called “Muslims for Ferguson” that is very active and continues to be very activist surrounding issues of police brutality in Ferguson.

**John Bowen:**

There is an organization called the Interfaith Partnership, which

is an organization of 30 different faith groups. The Muslim community is very much involved and have a lot of participants and they have a lot of interfaith exchange with members of other faith groups and it is very successful in this community.

**Audience question:**

Are there any examples of a Christian marrying a Muslim or a Jew marrying a Muslim in this region?

**Maryam Kashani:**

I think that has been happening for centuries.

**Audience question:**

Do you think Muslim people are called extremists because they have not been able to assimilate at the rapid pace of progressive change in the West?

**Geneive Abdo:**

That was sort of the implicit message that I was trying to explain. First of all, the way we view Muslims and the way they view themselves is very much a result of what is happening globally. The reason I used the example of Arab Christians is that we have changed as Americans in terms of what we think assimilation and integration is. You know, it was in the 1960's and 1970's that women wore headscarves to church. Although they didn't wear them in public for the most part, no one looked askance at that. So I think that it has been both ways: that we have changed our ideas because of what is perceived to have happened to the United States, and I do not want to go into U.S. policy right now, because I will become very unpopular—but it is U.S. policy, it is what we have done in some of these countries, how we perceive them, how they perceive us, and how we have changed what the standards are and our own self-designed standards of what we see as assimilation. So I think it has been both ways, and I know that I used a lot of statistics, because I think on this topic you have to use a lot of statistics otherwise it becomes a debate with a lot of ambiguity. But between 2001 and the end of 2014 there were only 105 violent acts committed by Muslims. The figures of Americans committing violent acts in American society is far higher. So again, that is why I raised this question in the beginning: Is it that American standards have exceptionalized Islam? I think it is a very complicated question to answer.

**Sherria Ayuandini:**

Sometimes it is because our idea of assimilation or integration is scaled by merit, so it is either you are assimilated or not, integrated or not. In the case of these young Dutch women in the Netherlands, for example, do we consider them not being integrated or not being assimilated because they might have a different view in terms of premarital sex? Is it simply because of that, that we see them as not assimilated? No, not necessarily. So to take an example of other aspects of their life: they speak Dutch well, they have employment and they come from the upper-middle class. Are those the kind of measurements that we want to see for assimilation? The problem here is not only assimilation or integration but also the idea that you either completely, or not at all, assimilate or integrate.

**Geneive Abdo:**

One of the reasons I have trouble with this question is because we are not being asked what we are assimilating to. Right? Like,

where are we heading? Where is progress? So I think that there is a certain false idea about progress and an assumption that if you are not getting there fast enough, then there is something wrong with you, or that you are conservative. So I just wanted to raise those issues.

**Nick Street:**

I think this goes back, in some ways, to John's point of adaptation. That is a much more fruitful angle to follow. The problems we are facing now are what we are describing as assimilation. Basically, a lot of people who I talk with are secular people or gay people or religious leaders, and whether they are considered effective assimilators is not so much on themselves, but more on others' perception of them. So it is important to know that there are assumptions that are going on in the backs of their minds as well.

**Audience question:**

What is the role of the media in deciding the narrative of young Muslims in the United States? Is it for better or for worse?

**Nick Street:**

The trouble is coming from the way we are telling media stories. One of the things that was important for me was, when reporting on this project, was to show Muslims, regardless of their religiosity, and the ironic thing is that religiosity has to do with one's ability to resist extremism. But getting back to your question, I think it is important for those of us in the news media to actually be eager to hear as many stories from as many kinds of people as we can possibly get in front of the camera, or on the page, or on the website. Basically, if you are not reporting specifically on Muslims in Islam with this sort of open-minded curiosity, and again if journalists have these sort of stereotypes in the back of their minds and they write about them, then they are sort of amplifying the problem.

So I think it is important for journalists to think about what it is that they are doing when they choose the stories that they choose to tell, but also that they try to find stories that show young people exercising agency in their lives. To my mind, that is one of the most important things that we can do. By way of offering a corrective to this clashing-civilizations narrative which dominates coverage of Islam these days, is to look for stories that allow people to be agents in their own lives and not just eager and mindless purveyors of violence and the ultra-extremes of violence, because both of those categories represent a tiny minority of Muslims in the world.

**Audience question:**

Why is the second generation of American Muslims more religious than the first?

**Geneive Abdo:**

If you are interested there is a professor at the University of Kentucky who has been for many years a Muslim, an African-American Muslim, who has actually gone into the mosques and researched this very question. It is very interesting. But back to the Pew polling, they did a study in 2007 showing that there is far more mosque attendance among the second-generation Muslims. When asked the question, and I do not like this question—"Which comes first, your Muslim identity or your American identity?"—the majority said "Muslim identity." The

reason I paid attention to this particular statistic is because it was confirming what I was finding anecdotally in the mosques.

I think there are a couple of reasons. One, again, what is happening globally. If you go to many Arab countries, and I only study the Arab world, so I do not want to talk about other Islamic countries. But in the Arab world, although we saw from the Arab uprisings the images of secular people killing and carrying out the revolutions, they were not the ones who finished them. In Egypt, we had an intermediary government of the Muslim Brotherhood that is still very, very powerful in Egypt. So I think what is happening here reflects what is happening in the Arab world, which is that there is a percentage of the population, and I do not want to say it is the majority of American Muslims, for whom the Islamic identity has become very important. This is why we have Zaytuna College and this is why we have an explosion of Islamic schools and mosques, because it has become important.

I think that the answer more broadly is the political context in which this is happening. Okay, so for the younger generation, the political context is the Middle East and what is happening globally; for their parents, the political context was the 60's and 70's. The Nasser period, the early Sadat period, the period in the Arab world where people wore mini-skirts and where national identity trumped religion. Now it is the opposite in my view. Religious identity is trumping national identity—and that is the concept of my next book.

**Nick Street:**

I think the picture is slightly different for typical immigrants from when the first generation came to work. This was after World War II, this was in the '60s and '70s, and people were getting recruited as unskilled laborers from Turkey to Germany and from North Africa to France and from South Asia to Britain, and they came as workers and many of them were Muslims. The ones I just mentioned were majority Muslim, but they were not there to establish mosques; they were there to make some money, send it back, and maybe go home when they got older. But they never did, because they realized that, hey, health care is better over here. In any case, their kids were growing up and they said, "Well, we are French or British or German. So we will play the game and you will give us jobs." But in Britain these were still the dirty "other" and they were treated as different even though they were born there.

I am obviously oversimplifying here, but I have talked with many French people, and they have said, "Well, we tried going back to Algeria and we were considered Frenchmen. We wore miniskirts. So we couldn't be accepted as European, we couldn't be accepted as Algerian or Turkish or anything else. So what sort of identity could we have? Well, that would be Islam." The mid-'80s is really the failure in this project of integration for these immigrants. Islam was the identity that could work.

And there was something else going on with that too, that wasn't so relevant to political developments in the Arab world, that was a little bit delayed with the second intifada. They looked around and said, "If we are going to be Muslim, then let's be good Muslims." Which means sort of "correct" Muslims in the sense that you get from book learning rather than growing up. So our mothers and our fathers, they were Muslims by growing up as Moroccans or as Pakistanis or as Turks. And maybe the headscarf is a little askew, and maybe the food wasn't always perfect, but everything else you simply did not question, is this Islamic or not? You simply lived the lives that you would live in these villages and towns in these parts of the world.

For the new generation now growing up in Bradford, UK, or somewhere else in Europe, they did not have any anchor points. The imams in their mosques were not that learned, so they bought books and they listened to lectures or they would even, later on, "call up Saudi Arabia" to find out the right answers. So in the worst of cases, this leads to a rigidified Islam rather than a lived tradition. The challenge now to Islamic teachers in these countries who are doing a valiant job, but they themselves have not been the greatest Islamic scholars either, is to try to impart a bit more contextualized and complicated notion of what Islamic learning is. But it is a long slog. It is going to take generations for this to work.

**Maryam Kashani:**

I just want to say something very quickly about the paradox of the American experience. Because they have been integrated or assimilated, they can build institutions. Which sort of comes later than we would like but yes, that is what has happened. The European Muslims are just trying to become employed. The American Muslims already have higher levels of education, higher levels of income. So that is why, because of the American experience, they can have the luxury of building institutions which then later are in some ways used against them.



## Panel 4: Global Issues, Local Debate

Moderator: Kem Knapp Sawyer  
Contributing Editor, Pulitzer Center

This is our fourth panel of the day and the title is “Global Issues, Local Debate.” We’re going to echo a bit of what Nick Street said earlier: What we see in the media is not the way it is.

We will look first at today’s contentious times: Politicians are calling for the exclusion of Muslim immigrants, climate-change denial remains for many a touchstone of religious faith, and abortion clinics are the focus of bitter, sometimes violent protests. In a time of polarization and anger, can religious faith be a force for positive dialogue and political consensus? We will also discuss the role of the media and educational institutions. What is their responsibility to dispel myths? What is our responsibility?

We have four panelists today and they’re on my left. We’ll start with Shaun Casey. Shaun Casey is the U.S. Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs. He has written on the ethics of the war in Iraq as well the role of religion in American presidential politics and he is the author of *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960*. Shaun is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, with a Master of Divinity Degree and a Doctor of Theology in Religion and Society. He earned his Bachelor’s at Abilene Christian University. He is a member of the American Academy of Religion and served as chair of its Committee on the Public Understanding of Religion.

The Office of Religion and Global Affairs, where Sean is now, advises the Secretary of State on policy matters as they relate to religion.

To Shaun’s left is Don Belt. Don Belt has traveled to 80 countries over the past three decades, working as a writer and editor of articles for *National Geographic*. He has reported on the issues of our time such as Islam and the West, the effects of global climate change, and the geopolitical trends that shape our world. Don joined the magazine’s Editorial Staff as a writer in 1985, later serving as Nat Geo’s senior editor for expeditions for three years; its foreign editor for five. He also served as *National Geographic*’s chief correspondent from 2006 to 2011. He has written articles on Islam, Arab Christians, Lawrence of Arabia, the Jordan River, Galilee, Jerusalem the life and times of Jesus, and sacred journeys or religious pilgrimages. Don was the editor in chief of the *Geographic* book, *The World of Islam*, featuring excerpted past *Nat Geo* stories from the Muslim world as well as his own commentary. He teaches at the University of Richmond and serves as the university outreach director of the Out of Eden Walk, in collaboration with the Pulitzer Center. You’re going to hear more about that later.

To Don’s left is Marie Griffith. Marie is the John C. Danforth Distinguished Professor in the Humanities here at Washington University in St. Louis, and she is the director of the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics. Professor Griffith obtained her undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia in Political and Social Thought and her doctorate in the study of religion from Harvard. She joined the faculty at Princeton where she was named Director for the Program in the Study of Women and Gender. She later returned Harvard as a professor in the Divinity School. Marie’s first major publication was *God’s Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*,

Her next book, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity*, explores the history of Christian-influenced attitudes and practices related to embodiment in modern America, culminating in the evangelical diet and fitness movement. Her next book will be an analysis of sexuality debates in twentieth-century American Christianity titled *Intimate Enemies: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*.

And to Marie's left is Ann Peters. Ann is director of development and outreach at the Pulitzer Center. She leads our Campus Consortium initiative and works directly with our partners—more than 20 colleges and universities including Washington University. The consortium features programming with journalists each year and offer international reporting fellowships to undergraduate and graduate students. Ann has worked as journalist, a lawyer and director of non-profit initiatives.

She is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Georgetown University Law Center. She began her career as a correspondent for *United Press International* and reported from North Carolina, Washington, D.C., Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Egypt and South Africa. Ann also has worked with Human Rights Watch, focusing on blinding laser weapons, laws of war and arms embargoes, and then in Washington, D.C. for the Open Society Institute as program director of its Landmines Project.

**Shaun Casey**  
Special Representative, Religion and Global Affairs,  
U.S. State Department

Well, thank you Kem for that introduction. It's always great to be back in St. Louis. As I was talking to the cabbie on the ride over, my sole claim to ties in St. Louis is that I owe the land-speed record from my hometown of Paducah, Kentucky to the old Busch Stadium, which was set in the last millennium. It's probably been broken by now. It's always great to be back in St. Louis and particularly to be here at an event sponsored by the Pulitzer Center. I'll say a little more later about your wonderful anniversary celebration in New York City that I had the privilege of attending. But for the moment, let me just say thank you for all the wonderful work you do.

The question before us is can religion be a source of good in an age of polarization? And I think the simple answer is yes it can be. And what I want to do is tell you an emerging story of how a relatively small set of small religious groups are beginning to find their public voice in our own democracy.

I want, first of all, to tell you a little bit about how I know this story, about how I've intersected across that based on my work in the State Department. But secondly I want to describe what these actors are like and what the pressure are that they are facing in their existence today. I'm actually going to walk you through four of them very quickly.



Kem Knapp Sawyer

I was the founder of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs at the U.S. Department of State and it's a very amazing thing to be hired by a Secretary of State to launch a new office. When you walk into the office the first day you have a waste basket, you have an empty file cabinet, and you have a part-time administrative assistant, and you're sitting around the office and then you sort of wake up and say "What do I do now?" There's 7 billion people on the planet, probably 70 million different forms of religion if we were honest and I know have the luxury of a staff of 30, which in State Department standards is huge, but there are, after all, 7 billion people out there and an infinite number of forms of religion around the world. And the task is really quite daunting. How do you organize that office? How do you try to build the arc of the federal government away from not-so-smart towards smart when it comes to engaging religion?

Kem noted that my office is the point of contact for both international and domestic actors. An actor can be an individual, it can be a global religious community, it can be an NGO; we use that term fairly inclusively. In my first four months, I had over 300 visitors who were eager to find out what the State Department did on religion and what we were hoping to do in the future. And many of them wanted to introduce themselves to the State Department for the first time because they've never been able to get anybody to answer the door when they knocked on it in previous days. So what I discovered by sort of throwing out the welcome mat was that most global religious communities had their American analogues, either directly connected people or cousins or expats. So the fact that things were happening globally with respect to religious communities usually meant somebody in America, "somebodies" in America, had a deep investment in the outcome of what the global religious community was doing. And I thought I was an expert on religion in America and after four months realized I didn't know anything about religion in America because of the wave of organizations that came and wanted to talk to me and introduce their communities to the State Department, both large and also quite small.

So we've had thousands of people now, domestic actors, come to our department and interact with our staff. And it's against that background the last two and a half years that I'm beginning to grapple with how to interact with messy American democracy. On the domestic side I actually see a couple of trends that I want to talk about today.

My central thesis is that there are actors both at the local and national level that are often formed in response to crises, but they also grow and they branch out. They look at issues ranging not only from their own plight or pressure or successes, but they also bring a wider human-rights lens or interacting with the public education system. They often move to interreligious work finding some of their deepest allies and some of their most vociferous opponents in the interreligious space. And finally, they show up at my doorstep wanting to do government advocacy. So I've had organizations that were comprised of two people come and knock on my door asking for a policy to be shifted in a different direction or commend us for a couple things maybe we had done well. I've also had global, well-organized, millennial-old groups come and knock on my door and insist that their advocacy for certain public policy positions be taken seriously.

What I'm most interested in, though, are the new players. The people, frankly, who have found their voice and found their organization primarily since 9/11—I would say certainly in the last 15 years. Their numbers are growing and they're finding



those of us who work in government in Washington D.C. at the end of a trail and they started this work locally, they've moved to the state level, they then graduated to the regional level and now they are in the international scene and they have found to come and interact with the U.S. federal government.

One example is the Hindu American Foundation, which was founded in 2003, one might argue as a result of 9/11. And they came to me early, early in my tenure and said, "We're concerned about the fate of the 40,000 Bhutanese refugees who have been resettled in the United States over the last few decades." Now again, I'm a religious expert in this space and I did not know we resettled 40,000 Bhutanese in the United States. So in the early days, I often had a response to a good question when I would say, "Uhhh, let me get back to you on that." So I told the Hindu American Foundation, "Let me get back to you," because this question was where did those 40,000 go? Where did they go when they landed here? And the State Department paid for the first 90 days of their resettlement because they were afraid that the Hindus among the Bhutanese were being apostatized. They were being pressured, they were being diverted from their own particular traditions wherever they ended up. And they wanted to provide services to what they saw was their constituents if in fact they could find them because they're a small organization, but they're a growing one. So what I was able to do was go to the head of our Refugee Resettlement Program and ask her, "Do we actually know where these 40,000 Bhutanese reside today?" And her answer was very interesting. She said, "No. The U.S. government doesn't track refugees once they land. But what we can say is we can identify where they landed and spent the first 90 days of their time in the United States." And it was her thesis that many times, and this has actually been proven true in my experience, whenever a refugee community begins to develop in Des Moines or Pocatello or Riverside, that often those communities become magnets for other refugees who continue to come from the same point of origin. So if you know over at 15-year period where the 40,000 landed, you can probably guess there still are large clusters in those cities where they did in fact arrive. We were able to communicate that information to the Hindu American Foundation. They had very sophisticated questions for me. I didn't have the slightest idea what the answer was and I did my homework and I gave them I think the kind of information they wanted so that now they're capable of reaching out with programming to Bhutanese refugees who have now come to the United States over the last decade or two.

The second example has to do American Yazidi groups. You remember back to the summer of 2014 in Mount Sinjar when there were many Yazidis trapped in the face of ISIL. We

intervened militarily to try to prevent the genocide. Suddenly I had multiple Yazidi Americans knocking on my door saying, “Please communicate to your secretary our people are in deep peril and we want to make sure they get protections.” They were from, not the East Coast, but three mid-country cities. Now I have to say I had never heard of these Yazidi communities before that crisis popped up, but they knew how to get to the United States government, they knew how to communicate the peril their communities were in and they were able to ask for help in just an amazing, spontaneous response to a crisis where their antecedents, if you will, their main community that lived in Northern Iraq, was literally facing an existential extermination.

The third group, and this is really not a small group at all, but there is an amazing array of American Muslim groups and I’m not going to run a particular list here. But, what I want to observe is we have the national organizations like Islamic Society of North America, which provides sort of an umbrella for many people. But I witnessed how there are more and more large American mosques, both Sunni and Shiite, that are having a huge impact not only in the immediate geographical area, but are navigating in national and international politics. I think this is new. I think this is growing and the one example I site is the All Dulles Area Muslim Society. Now run that acronym. It’s the ADAMS Mosque run by Imam Mohamed Magid who was one of the intellectual engines behind the recent Marrakesh Declaration. If you’re not familiar with that, Google “Marrakesh Declaration” and you’ll see this was about a year, year and a half project, among 120 global Muslim scholars to take a stand on a number of issues with respect to religion minorities in majority Muslim countries and a range of other amazing statements. And this was frankly started by a local imam who has grown really quite smart and quite wise in terms of leveraging international political leverage.

And the finally, the fourth group I’m going to point to is local diaspora groups that have formed around a number of issues but the one I have experienced most directly has formed primarily about how to resettle their own co-religionists, if you will, in the location they already are. I don’t want to preempt my talk tonight, but I am talking about refugee resettlement and one of the things we’ve seen now is that in the major cities across the

***I see these new organizations are generating real social capital while refusing to simply be victims. I think it is the latest iteration of an old American story.***

U.S.—we’ve resettled in 180 cities in America, which is pretty mind-blowing—but you find among veteran refugees a really strong willingness to help their brothers and sisters who are just getting off the plane now, to become familiar with the new environments they are a part of. And these diaspora groups are really quite fundamental to the transition of a refugee citizen in the United States. I was in Phoenix and I met a group of Burundians who helped new refugees from Burundi understand what life in Phoenix is like and how different it is from their city of origin. This is now a nationwide phenomenon.

So in closing, let me say I think I see this as American democracy at its best. I don’t want to talk about assimilation, I don’t want to talk about integration. I mean, I heard the tail end of the debate in the last panel and I’m sorry I missed that because I’m

fascinated by that discussion, but I see these new organizations are generating real social capital while refusing to simply be victims. I think it is the latest iteration of an old American story. I wrote a book about how U.S. Catholics came to political age in the 1960 presidential campaign. I think that’s analogues to what’s going on now in terms of the refugee volume coming in to the United States. There’s no single path and to me that’s the brilliance not only of the refugee community coming over; it’s also part of the brilliance of American democracy. There’s no single path, no single model that says once you get off the plane as a refugee, you have to be this, this, this and this to be fully American. I think it’s American pluralism at its best. Thank you very much.

## **Don Belt** **Out of Eden Walk Project, University of Richmond**

Kem, that was a beautiful introduction. Thanks to the Pulitzer Center for inviting me here, the Luce Foundation to Washington University. I have a slight connection to St. Louis. I was born here and my father actually went to Washington University on the GI Bill after World War II. We moved away when I was 5, but those memories are very sweet. I went by my grandmother’s old house along Big Bend Boulevard yesterday on my way in.

And I’m also grateful, just to take a second, to the Pulitzer Center for working with me on a project I’ve been involved with for the last few years called the Out of Eden Walk. I’ve talked to some of you all about this project, but my friend Paul Salopek is walking around the world from Ethiopia to the southern tip of South America over the course of 10 years. He’s a brilliant Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist and he’s doing reporting as he goes and it’s really an extraordinary project and with the Pulitzer Center’s help I’ve been able to take my curriculum that I have developed to teach at the University of Richmond to teach to other universities around the country through their campus consortium, with help from Ann Peters and from Jon and others at the Pulitzer Center.

Global and local. I think that’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to talk a little bit about global things and then come back and try to bring them a little bit closer to home. As Cynthia did so beautifully before, I’m going to take this overseas to begin with. My preferred destination is Pakistan because if we’re talking about the intersection of religion and politics or religion and government, Pakistan is actually an interesting test case in lots of ways. I had the privilege of spending, oh gosh, a couple of months in Pakistan a few years ago and driving like 8,000 miles around Pakistan and I just want to tell you three little insights I got from those travels that just may help visualize what reality is like for people in that part of the world.

In October 2005, there was a huge earthquake, like a magnitude-8 earthquake, in Kashmir, centered in the Pakistan side of the border. It was a devastating earthquake and it was just awful. It destroyed cities north of Abbottabad, which is where Osama Bin Laden was found. It took the Pakistani government eight days to mobilize an army response in Abbottabad, which is about 30 minutes away, to get to the earthquake area, to Muzaffarabad and the other cities that had been devastated by this earthquake and start to come to the aid of the people. It took them eight days to get them 30 miles up the road.

In the meantime, the Jihadis, all these Jihadi groups that the Pakistani government had placed in Kashmir to fight against the Indians—Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, these other Jihadi groups—came to the aid of the people of Pakistan, these villagers in Muzaffarabad and other places. They set up first aid, ER, all kinds of things. They set up first aid tents and later they set up health clinics. All kinds of ministering to the needs of the people. So when the Pakistani government finally arrived eight days late and many dollars short, the infrastructure was already in place to help those people.

The people of Pakistan responded to this disaster with open hearts and open wallets and donated everything they could get their hands on to help these poor people in Kashmir. And all that aid went not to the Pakistani government, but was sent to these local Jihadi groups. So that's the way in which these groups put down even deeper roots in that part of Pakistan than they already had. They cemented in the minds of the Pakistanis the idea that when the government fails, there has to be an alternative. There has to be a better way and at least these people were doing good by these local people who were suffering.

The second point is that the justice system in Pakistan is absolutely dysfunctional. I spent some time in Pakistan going around with human rights lawyers from Lahore and we visited a local family in South Punjab whose 16-year-old daughter had been raped by a gang sent by the landlord who's trying to push them off the land where they had lived for 40 years. Pakistani law is such that if you occupy a piece of land for, I think it's 40 years, then you own that land. They had been tenant farmers for all that time and the landlord wanted to get them off the land so he sent his thugs in to terrorize the family, rape the poor daughter, and scare them into leaving.

They turned instead to the human rights lawyer I was with—who was later assassinated actually by one of those Jihadi groups I just described. But we went to the local police to hear what they had in terms of their investigation in this whole thing and of course the local police, the local authorities, were completely corrupt. They had been bought off long ago by the wealthy land owner. The police were not investigating. The police were actually blaming the victim as so often happens everywhere. And so there was no justice to this poor family and at one point the lawyer I was with made the point that this was the kind of thing that enabled the Taliban to take over Afghanistan after 1992. When the Soviets pulled out there was a vacuum that was filled by war lords, in fact, in Afghanistan, that essentially brutalized the population in all kinds of ways. The Taliban arose as a movement against that sort of brutality and that sort of injustice. And so the human rights lawyer compared what was going on there in Punjab to exactly the same conditions that were present in Afghanistan.

And then finally I spent some time looking into the education system when I was driving around those 8,000 miles. I dropped in on a number of government schools in small villages and towns. Invariably the government schools were empty buildings. There was a principal who was being paid, a whole bunch of teachers who were being paid, there were supplies somewhere, there were books somewhere, but they weren't in that school. None of the people were there. It was just empty. The Pakistanis jokingly referred to government schools as ghost schools. There are like 11,000 of them across Pakistan. I mean, the school is semi-functioning but it was like sixth graders teaching third graders. The local people in the village needed a school where their kids could be educated but it was just ad hoc. And the

people who were supposed to be administering and teaching in that school were nowhere to be found. They were pulling a paycheck. They were probably back in Karachi or someplace but they weren't in the village where they were supposed to be.

So as an alternative to that, if you are a poor farmer or poor villager somewhere and you want your child to get an education and the government school is totally dysfunctional, you send your kid to a madrassa in Pakistan, which is what millions and millions of kids have done and millions and millions of families have done. I actually visited a number of madrassas, but one in particular I remember was in Peshawar. It's in the northwest frontier part of Pakistan, kind of the gateway to Afghanistan. I was just hanging around the street one day, talking to people, talking to shopkeepers, and some of the kids came out of the side door of this madrassa and we struck up a conversation. They were between the ages of 10 and 16 and we talked for a few minutes and then they said, "We have to go back inside, but come back at 6 o'clock. You can have dinner with us." So I was like, "Oh man, this is great." So my interpreter and I came back at 6, knocked on the side door of this madrassa, went inside, and these kids had actually prepared a little blanket, you know, and some food. The big shots, the Jihadis, basically were running this madrassa and didn't know we were there so we were able to sit and talk to these guys for about 20 minutes before we were discovered and kicked out.

But that's when I learned what those conditions were and the kids in the madrassa were already being indoctrinated. They're already being taught. You know, their whole education was the Qu'ran, basically, but they got three square meals a day and a roof over their head. They were being taught the sort of Clash of Civilizations thing. You know, Islam versus the West. Islam was under attack. So they were being primed to fight that Jihad just as their previous generation had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan with Pakistan's help.

And then finally, I just want to bring back to one quick thing and then I'll be done. After 9/11, within a day, I would say, hours after the plane was hitting the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon, the switchboard at *National Geographic* was just lit up with people calling and writing emails, etc. "We are looking for some authentic information about Islam. Can you help us? Are there past *National Geographic* stories that you can Xerox and send to us? We just want to learn more about Islam." And I came up with the idea and we moved forward on it to do a book basically in very short order where we took some of the highlights of the 120 years of *National Geographic*, little excerpts, to kind of show the progression of the way the magazine had covered Islam over the course of all that time and I wrote commentary to put it in context for the modern reader. And the book did very well.

But on the book tour—this is where I'm going with this little story—on the book tour, you know I went around the country and I was on TV a lot, I was on radio programs, I was on Fox, I was on Lou Dobbs's show, I was on this crazy morning show *Fox and Friends*, I was on local call-in talk radio in the South. But I remember that almost nothing I heard in those interviews was what I considered to be Islamophobic in nature. You know, there were some pretty good questions that came from those interviews, but there wasn't that level of implied hostility in any of the questions I got, even from the most right-wing of those radio stations. It hadn't yet taken hold and part of that was because of the rhetoric of the politicians. You remember George W. Bush? Well at least he said in the early days after 9/11 that Islam is a religion of peace and that sort of came to be a bit of a

mantra. I mean, he blew it in other ways like talking about the Crusades, and of course that statement didn't register here, but over there people heard it loud and clear.

But I look back on that very nostalgically because look at what the discourse is today on television and our political discourse. The way Muslims are talked about in mainstream media, on cable TV, etc. has degenerated so much. It's become so polarized and so incendiary that you've got politicians like Trump, and that's a whole other story. Even Ted Cruz is saying to send police patrols into Muslim neighborhoods to try to tamp down radicalism. And thank God the interview where he made that pronouncement, the journalist turned on him and called him on it, called him to account on that silly comment because for the most part we don't have "Muslim neighborhoods." There are all these Muslims who are integrated into our society; they are not legally organized in neighborhoods that you could patrol.

I just want to say that from my perspective, what this conference does, what the Pulitzer Center does, certainly what the Danforth Center does, is most necessary—because the voices of moderation, the voices of interfaith dialogue, are so often drowned out and never even reach the cable news network audiences that predominate in our media diet these days.

Marie Griffith  
Director, John C. Danforth Center on Religion  
and Politics

I've been asked to talk a little bit about reproductive rights, which of course was covered this morning in a wonderful panel about the global scene. I'm going to talk a little bit about the US since I'm an Americanist. But there is no doubt that reproductive health is a very divisive global issue. We heard all about that and we can go on for days in different political contexts. And it's a very fraught issue. One thing that was alluded to briefly this morning is the long history of American organizations and even the U.S. government in forced sterilization programs over many years and the continued suspicion that has spread today in many parts of the world and in the United States itself. So the fear that reproductive health programs are somehow intended to decimate populations is, I think, a very live belief and unfortunately there were enough historical realities to that to make it credible.

So there's a lot out there that we can talk about and this is a very, very difficult topic to address. As we know, our own public discourse, even in the United States, is so polarized. I mean, is there a more polarizing issue in the United States than abortion? You know, I just don't know.

So the question that I've been asked to address is really essentially "How do we bring people together on the question of abortion and on other reproductive rights issues? How can religion be a positive force? Can it be a positive force?" And, like Shaun, I do think that it can, but I think that it's very, very difficult. So I just want to offer a few reflections, both historical and maybe contemporary about this.

So this morning's panel was largely, but not completely, focused on the conservative religious forces that work globally and in the U.S. to restrict or outlaw abortion. So I thought I want to focus a little bit elsewhere and to just think about what we



Marie Griffith. Image by Bethel Mandefro

would, I guess, consider the religious progressive side of this as well as the religious moderate work on this. And to get to abortion, I just want to mention it's been mentioned today, my book title has changed. It's no longer *Christian Sex and Politics*. It's *Intimate Enemies: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*. How's that for a title? What I'm trying to do there in this book is to really go through the past century of debates over various sexuality issues starting with Margaret Sanger and the birth control movement, moving through censorship sorts of debates and pornography, the Kinsey Reports and the very polarized religious reaction there was then in the 1950s, moving into sex education, sexual harassment and on up, of course, on to same sex marriage. So I'm trying to weave a lot of stuff together into this book that really wants to ask the question: why? Why do we keep debating and arguing about sexuality and reproductive issues over and over again? And I try to articulate what I see as the very deep fears that are driving much of this kind of argumentation over and over again, one of them being, as we repeatedly see, some kind of fear articulated differently about women and women's freedom and women's sexual freedom outside of marriage. That theme, as we know and as I try to really detail very clearly, emerges over and over and over again.

Anyway, let me talk a little bit about what I do see over and over again as well as the religious resources have been mobilized to address all the issues that I just mentioned in a different sort of way, in a way that I would personally say is a more positive direction. This morning Cynthia Gorney talked about religious people grappling with faith and with the question, "What does God want?" as well as grappling with culture. And, you know, I see that with the religious progressives and the liberals as well, sort of grappling with the fact that somehow in all these issues there are different religious perspectives on sexuality and on gender

roles and all of these things. It's not that there's a religious view and a secular view, it is that there are many different religious views within all of that. And what I think is really lost in the mix is the kind of progressive religious side of that. And I don't know why it gets lost in the mix. I'd love to ask the journalists why you think that side that isn't more covered. Is it just not as interesting? Is it just not newsy enough? Why doesn't that get attention? Because it's very much out there.

I was also thinking about what Tom Hundley mentioned this morning talking about the very high rate of abortion in Indonesia alongside the resistance there even among pro-choice groups to this notion that my body is entirely my own, which is kind of very American on the pro-choice side. It's just kind of a sacred mantra. My body is entirely my own. And in some ways the real truth is that too becomes a conversation stopper in many ways that I think you described on the Indonesian side and I think it's also true in the American context as well. So I just wanted to mention those to give us some points to work with, I guess. And then I want to offer a couple of recent historical examples that illustrate the ways in which religion can be a positive force or religious leaders, religious people, can be a positive force in this debate over abortion. And probably many of you know these names.

Howard Moody is the first person I want to mention. He was the pastor at Judson Memorial Church in New York from 1957 to 1992 and, of course, he was the key clergyman—he did many things over his amazing career—but he was the key clergyman who worked with others to setup the clergy consultation service in 1967, which provided referrals to women for safe abortions in New York and it became a national network. After abortion was legalized in New York, that group of clergy also set up the first abortion clinic in the State of New York. Howard Moody's life and writings—he didn't write as much as I wish because he was so busy being an activist, darn it—but we do have some stuff from him that he co-wrote with Arlene Carmen and others. You know I see him as having two key religious motivations here, and he had more than that, but he wants to just care for the women from a sort true Christian compassion. For women who were suffering, for families who were suffering—for whatever reason that they could not welcome another child into the world. He had deep interactions with women who had these violent, unsafe abortions that we heard a bit about this morning and women who had been permanently damaged or who died and the families of women like that. So he articulated very clearly a care for the women. He also worked a lot with prostitutes, I should mention. It was the same thing there and he was very active in the early gay civil rights movement as well. So care for the women and also just a religious desire, a religiously motivated desire as I see it in him, that all children brought into the world be wanted children. The Bible, as others have pointed out and as he wrote as well and many times said, the Bible does not speak on abortion, so from a biblical perspective, which is what Protestants at least come from, there's really no clear preset on when life begins or any divine prohibition on abortion. Now, people can disagree about all of this, but I just call you to the life that he led and that others like him led in that movement, which was really driven by compassion and by faith.

The second figure I just want to mention, and I know she's known to many of you, is Frances Kissling, who is still at it and alive and well. Howard Moody died a few years ago but Frances Kissling is still alive. She served as the president of the organization Catholics for a Free Choice, which is now simply Catholics for Choice. She was president from 1982 to 2007. I'm happy to talk about that, but I especially want to call attention

to the work she has tried to do in a variety of setting on what she terms the moral status of the fetus.

Frances Kissling, herself of Catholic background, thinks the pro-choice movement has gone terribly off kilter by not acknowledging some of the moral issues that are so charged for pro-life advocates. One of these that she sees and thinks that we really need to be able to address is the moral status of the fetus. For raising this issue—Cynthia Gorney and I were talking about this earlier and Cynthia knows this story very well, too—she's really been shunned by a lot of the pro-choice organizations, even the ones that she's worked with, and by many pro-choice leaders. So that's a little depressing to think that we are so polarized that even kind of moderate, middle ground voices don't seem to be very effective. The common ground network between life and choice, which Cynthia talked about in her book, I asked her today what happened to them because they were a great example of a group that tried to bring pro-life and pro-choice people together, working in dialogues over and over again and workshopping things and trying to collaborate on issues they can agree on, whether it was adoption policies or contraceptive access, sexuality education, a whole range of things. And I looked for them in recent years and had a feeling things have not gone well for them over the long term and indeed sadly they just couldn't do it. They dissolved.

So I'd like to have a happier, more positive story about organizations that seem to make this work, but it's hard to find. The one I'll mention that I wish got more attention today is the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, which is a national organization. Hopefully many of you know about it. They focus on access to abortion care, access to contraception, access to sexuality education and religious liberty and really thinking about what religious liberty means on all sides. Only 11 states today have active affiliates. There is some small local activity in other states, they say, but there's really only 11 states listed for them where there are local affiliates. So that's a struggling organization too. And Missouri is not among them. Missouri is not one of the states.

I'd like to think that there are possibilities for more local conversations and I guess the example I'd like to leave you with here comes from right here is St. Louis. As you're all aware, we're about ten minutes from where Michael Brown was killed in Ferguson a year and a half ago in August of 2014. The kind of local movement that has emerged here, and of course elsewhere in the country too, has been astonishing. It has been driven in many cases, I think in large part, by local religious leaders. People like Mike Kinman, dean of the Christ Church Cathedral here, and the Rev. Traci Blackmon, pastor of the United Church of Christ in Florissant.

So at a local level I see these very deeply divisive issues—because in St. Louis racism is a very divisive issue. People have a very difficult time talking about this issue here. But the kinds of coalitions that have been developed by these local religious leaders, I think are very promising and I'd like to see more of that happen on the abortion and the reproductive rights ground as well. Thank you.



Ann Peters. Image by Bethel Mandefro

Ann Peters  
Campus Consortium Initiative, Pulitzer Center

On this panel, we're asking if religion can be a force for positive dialogue in a time of polarization. I want to refocus that question a bit to ask how can we create arenas where we no longer consider individuals of different cultures, of different religions, as the other? I'm going to talk through some of the work that we've done at the Pulitzer Center. One of our goals is how do we bridge those divides from early on, from elementary school, middle school, high school, then up to graduate school levels and community venues? And I'll provide a couple of examples where we're using journalism, we hope, to provide stronger bridges.

This week in St. Louis we have Justin Catanoso of Wake Forest, who some of you heard from on the panel earlier today, talking about his own reporting on the environment, in particular in Latin America. In two days he'll be at eight schools here including an event for the community at Nerinx Hall. That's just one of the ways that we bring the journalists right down to the local level. Earlier Justin had also been at Westchester Community College and he was also in a panel discussion at American University. We'll probably ask him to do more things. I think that's just a critical part of how we engage folks and how we engage online, whether it's from online efforts.

Getting folks into the classrooms as early as possible and continuing these dialogues with students and opening their eyes to different cultures and religions is critical. While today we're focusing on religion, you can take that same approach in the public health sphere, on the environment, on natural resources extraction, and so forth. With over 100 projects a year, there's a lot to discuss and focus in on. Another example is our Everyday Africa project. That was an effort by a photographer and a journalist, a writer, who were doing reporting in Africa and were seeing the disconnect between realities on the ground and how that continent was portrayed in the U.S. They came up with the idea of using their cell phones to photograph Africans around the continent doing everyday things—going to weddings, playing in playgrounds, going grocery store shopping, sitting at restaurants and cafes—and then taking those images and their reporting into classrooms. We've worked with them to take this initiative into many of our partner schools. And in that context, they would ask the students, in particular the younger students, what have they heard about Africa. What do they think is going on in that continent? Or in a particular country? Because that was part of the problem, they thought it was a one big country as opposed to a continent. But they would also come up with terms like war, famine, disease, lately Ebola. There were very negative

images that they had. The journalists would then go through conversations with them in terms of what they were reporting on, what they were seeing when they were doing these reporting trips. And at the end of these sessions, which usually lasted a couple of hours, again depending on the age of the students, there were a lot of different responses. There was playgrounds. There was family get togethers. There was just a huge change in perspective, just within that short period of time. So I think in terms of how we get more folks connecting at those levels, say what do our images tell us? And then in our mind what we haven't yet learned about and then going through that process of showing what's going on in the everyday life of Africa and an entire continent. Since then there was Everyday Brooklyn. There's Everyday D.C. It could be Everyday St. Louis. It could be any place to just expand the horizons across the students, the broader community, and get folks to better understand other religions and other cultures so we don't have this "other" and these false images.

The other project that I wanted to talk about was our work with Daniella Zalzman, a photojournalist now currently based in London who has traveled in a number of different places with Pulitzer Center support—from the impact of government residential schools on the native American populations of northwest Canada to the impact of discrimination on the LGBT community in Uganda. In the Uganda project she explored the influence, or the presumed influence, of religious leaders and from that she did a series called "Faces of Faith" where she interviewed religious leaders and community leaders. She did an interview on this subject with James Nickels of the Huffington Post. He had written that when we talk about the rights of the LGBT community in Uganda, it tends to always be in terms of religion-based oppression, violence and murder. He asked whether there are voices that often rise to the top when same-sex attraction in Uganda is discussed and are more representative, actually, of the religious leaders as a whole in that nation. Daniella noted that while the majority of the population in Uganda is either Catholic or Church of Uganda Anglican, she found that American-style Evangelicalism was growing in popularity. She voiced the hope that her reporting, with interviews of more thoughtful and measured religious leaders, could provide a truer representation of what Ugandans were actually hearing in their places of worship every week. She said that more than anything she hoped that her work would encourage more people to start conversations on these issues.



A student from the Inspired Teaching School shows her father some of her classmates' photographs on display at the Pulitzer Center. Image by Jin Ding, Washington, D.C., 2016.

What she did in particular with her project “Faces of Faith” was to bring that information also to Harvard University, to conferences and conversations, exhibits and so forth. And again to engage with individuals to explain more of the situation that religious leaders were speaking to. She took that approach on what she called “The Empathy Gap Project” to younger students as well. In Washington D.C. she spent three days in October this past year and another date in January working with students at the Inspired Teaching Public Charter School, one of our education partners in Washington D.C. She asked the students with their principal and lead teachers to interview classmates and find what they called “the strangers beside us” so that they could eventually exhibit final portraits of the individuals that were right beside them in their school but that they didn’t truly know. And she came up with the idea, she said, after she realized it seemed like it was becoming harder and harder for all of us to put ourselves in each other’s shoes, and that we all have to deal with conflict and strife in different ways.

It was really remarkable when the students came into our office and sat down and were talking about their experiences. One seventh grader said that, and this is a direct quote from what he was telling us, “That we stand next to people every day in our class, but still we don’t know some things about them. The project forced me to learn more now that I know how some of my classmates feel about politics and things that scare them.” So for this particular seventh grader, it really opened up his mind to others he was not familiar with.

I think the work that Daniella was doing, the work that Peter DiCampo and Austin Merrill have been doing, I think that can help us learn to engage students and engage communities, to help individuals see those from disparate communities not as the “other” but as people who they can connect with more.

**Kem Sawyer:**

I want to start with one question. This morning Justin Catanoso was talking about Pope Francis’s encyclical, so I thought I would bring this full circle and talk about Pope Francis’s more recent statement *Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love*, which was released a couple weeks ago. In this statement, Francis discusses marriage and family life. He skirts the issues of contraception and gay marriage. However, he does speak to faith as a positive force—the topic of our panel. It is love that is the hallmark of faith. Riffing on the oft quoted verse, “Love endures all things,”

he says, “This means that love bears every trial with a positive attitude. It stands firm in hostile surroundings. This “endurance” involves not only the ability to tolerate certain aggravations, but something greater: a constant readiness to confront any challenge. It is a love that never gives up, even in the darkest hour.”

It’s a moving passage. I am struck by the juxtaposition of the two words “positive” and “challenge” when it comes to love: The need to bear every trial with a positive attitude and the desire to maintain a constant readiness to confront any challenge.

Pope Francis goes on to quote Dr. Martin Luther King at some length, saying, “When you rise to the level of love, of its great beauty and power, you seek only to defeat evil systems. Individuals who happen to be caught up in that system, you love, but you seek to defeat the system.” I’d like to ask the panelists to comment on the pope’s statement: To what extent is this core belief shared by people of faith around the world? Is it possible? Is it necessary? What influence will “Joy of Love”—none of which is binding—have on Catholics? And on the world?

**Marie Griffith:**

It’s a moving passage. I think that Catholics take what they want, it seems to be, from their leaders including the pope. I’ve read a lot of compelling pieces that suggest that Pope Francis is sort of moving in a certain direction. And I’ve read other compelling pieces that say this is all well and good but the positions aren’t changing on these issues. And that kind of shows in some ways the very polarization we’ve been discussing. So a lot of folks, you know, they’re not going to accept that there’s a shift in any real direction except in tone or in emphasis. And those things are important, but I think a lot of the more liberal Catholics, in the U.S. at least, they would not be as moved by that passage as some others would be. I haven’t read the document myself, so I’m not going to comment on it, but I appreciate what you say that the emphases there are applicable in all sorts of realms.

**Shaun Casey:**

Like Marie, I have not read it. I have this file I call my 2017 Reading List for when I retire as a diplomat and go back to the academy and this is on that list. I have to confess I’m of two minds on this. If I put on my old theologian, ethicist scholar hat, and I am from the Christian tradition, I am deeply attracted to that. But then there’s sort of the empirical diplomatic side of me that has traveled the world, gone to 20 countries across four continents, and I’m really skeptical of that overlap between religious faiths because there are people in interreligious, interfaith dialogues that believe if we just try reconciliation and forgiveness, we can solve all the world’s problems. And I’ve seen the blank-eyed stares across the table of people who were, in fact, liberal Christians at the invitation of “Come, let us be reconciled.” It just does not connect with them. So as attractive as it is, even within the Christian community we have a hard time embracing this, which has just been demonstrated on this vast issue of reproductive rights.

So speaking as a diplomat, we look for overlap where we find it. We have no theological position. We don’t endorse religion over non-religion. We’re simply looking for partnerships that may yield diplomatic, informed policy success. So if there’s a Christian community and a non-Christian community and they’re able to come together and enjoy love, so be it. That’s great. But we don’t go selling that because we have no theological grounding or standing by which we can make that argument for people.

At the end of the day, I will particularly bring it to the American context, I'll look for overlap wherever I find it and sometimes maybe it is a common understanding of the joy of love. I think my daughter's own experience growing up in a multicultural, incredibly diverse public high school and the real powerful reconciliation when you use that word "the joy of love" happened at the cafeteria table where there would be seven or eight different religions around the table and no adult leadership at all. In fact, the school was terrified about that, about the tapestry of religion. They just didn't know how to approach it, but sometimes 17- and 16-year-old girls can contribute to that on their own in a way that the clergy or school officials simply don't have a clue. And that's a beautiful, basic thing to see happen. They sort of came to it on their own with their own diversity and pluralism.

**Audience question:**

Are anti-abortion laws as much anti-economic as they are anti-religious, meaning they discriminate against people who don't have the choices that others have?

**Marie Griffith:**

I think that point has actually been made quite a bit. I mean, that's a fairly common view, I think, in pro-choice circles and literature that really says women have always found a way to get abortions and when it was illegal in the US, for decades and throughout US history, they've found ways to do it. It just hasn't been safe. But for wealthy women who could fly to Europe or fly to other parts of the world or just get down to Mexico or whatever, they could find safer ways to do it so I think that the point that the anti-abortion laws ultimately discriminate against poor people is empirically verifiable. Whether that's the motivation? I think that a whole other question. Religious motivation, I do take that seriously—you know, from the Catholic side and all. The view that life begins at conception is a deeply held religious view among many people. So I'm not cynical enough to say they're pretending it's religious when it's really economic, but nonetheless I think the point is well taken that in fact it is discriminating against people without the means to get abortions.

**Audience question:**

I'm interested in what you were saying about how the pro-choice movement might be more effective if they were able to acknowledge the fetus as a moral being. I was hoping you could elaborate on that a little bit about how they can actually incorporate that into their messaging in an effective way that brought people from the other side to the middle, too.

**Marie Griffith:**

Well, you know, I didn't go back and reread what Francis Kissling has had to say about this lately and I'm not arguing necessarily for that point of view. I'm saying that it very much seems to me that to be able to ask the question and really what I see Francis is saying is at least we should be able to talk about that and if we can't even raise the question without people leaving the room and that in itself is a conversation stopper, then how are we ever going to get through the more difficult debates about everything? I find that compelling. I'm not suggesting that I know exactly how that debate would go or the discussion it would produce, but I think that it is very important to be able to at least open that conversation. Is that clearer? That's really what I was thinking.

**Audience question:**

What are we to make of these extremist Jihadi groups that are preaching hatred toward the west, but that at the same time are serving a really important social function with things like the madrassas' educational role and aid after the earthquake?

**Don Belt:**

The madrassas, the earthquake relief, all those kinds of things, I think they are serving an important function that the government for whatever reason—I chalk it up to the sort of dysfunctionality of the Pakistani government to respond to those kinds of humanitarian situations. Civil society in general in Pakistan is in such disarray or has fallen into such disarray that someone has to take up the slack and the Jihadi groups that I mentioned have seen an opportunity to expand their constituencies or to take on the role of the saviors of the people in some way. By all means, they're not the only ones in Pakistan doing those kinds of things. I mean, one of the most amazing people I've ever met in my travels was a secular Pakistani man who started an ambulance service in Pakistan, a private ambulance service that started back in the 1950s because nobody else was doing it. He was driving his old station wagon around picking up dead bodies from the streets of Karachi every night and giving them a decent burial. That has expanded to the point where he is the only first-responding ambulance in Pakistan. So his ambulances are all over the place. He's a very humble man. But in this ambulance service, he's putting his faith into practice. It's not for a political reason, it's for a humanitarian reason. But those Jihadi groups I think have taken advantage of the lack of response from the Pakistani government to make their own case for legitimacy.

**Audience question:**

Can you tell us a little bit more about what you learned in the post-9/11 *National Geographic* book on covering this Muslims, given the discussion today on the role of media, media representations, visual portrayals, etc. How did that change?

**Don Belt:**

The point I sort of cut through at the end because I was running long was that in the post-9/11 world what's happened is that there are many voices that are trying to bridge the gap, to engage in cross-cultural education. I was involved with one such group led by Prince Hassan of Jordan who was a really smart, committed public servant who was trying to bring the Muslim and the Christian world together to talk about what we had in common. The bright Abrahamic faiths, right? Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Couldn't get on TV. Can't get the air time. There's too much out there. You know, in a push for ratings, in modern television, especially the cable television world, those voices never get on TV because they're not hot enough. They don't raise the temperature enough or the pulse rate enough to win some ratings and that's what that is all about.

What I discovered when I went all the way back to the beginning of *National Geographic* and started pulling out selected excerpts from stories was that, I mean it was pretty much what you would expect. *National Geographic* in the 1880s, 1890s, early 1900s was a very sort of colonial enterprise and our vision of what the Muslim world was all about was that it was very barbaric, it was strange, it was exotic, it was weird. So these reports from our early days in that part of the world were breathless, kind of these close calls with mobs of Shiites in Karbala who were

lashing themselves and the author mistook it for a mob that was bloodthirsty after him so he ran out of town. That sort of thing. All the way up through a more sophisticated reporting in recent decades. I mean the various watersheds—the founding of Israel in 1948, the birth of Pakistan and India in 1947, the independence movement after the first World War, the '67 War, the war in Algeria, the Algerian War of Independence, 1979 when there was an Islamic revolution in Iran, the takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—those watershed movements were benchmarks for an increasing sophistication of reportage that went on to cover those events. I'm rather proud of the coverage *National Geographic* has given the Muslim world or Arab world or whatever you want to call it since, I would say, the 1980s—when we started to take these things very seriously and stopped looking at the world through these kind of weird, wacky glasses. And now today with the work that Cynthia and others are doing, I mean it's real-world coverage that has impact and resonance. That's what I would say.

**Audience question:**

How did some goals change from when you started the Office of Religion and Global Affairs until now? What was the evolution?

**Shaun Casey:**

That's a great question. I think about this a lot. The first thing is, I know what I don't know. When I graduated with my doctorate from Harvard, that was the dumbest I ever felt in my life. You know, you really realize they are kicking you out and there's just so much you didn't learn. And part of me looks back and thinks of all the classes I should have taken to prepare me for this job as opposed to the ones I did take. So I know what I know and I know what I don't know.

Two things that I didn't know: I did not know the bureaucracy. I often joke there are rooms full of bones of academics who came in and said, "I'm going to revolutionize this place. I'm going to shake it and wake it up." And I just knew. The largest thing I've organized as a graduate professor is a seminar of 15 people. Now I'm going into this bureaucracy with 70,000 employees, so I had to hire people that knew the bureaucracy and I didn't. I also knew that given the complexity of lived religion around the world I needed to hire people who knew things I will never master. I know the Western Christian tradition fairly well but if you're trying to run the Office of Religion and Global Affairs, that's not going to cut it. I need to hire people who know religion around the planet. So the good news is, I hired really smart people who made me look 1,000 times better than I really am. That is in some ways sheer dumb luck, but I got six regional advisors. The state department covers the world in six, somewhat defensible regions. So I hired 30 employees. Among us we have over 20 graduate degrees in religion. So I didn't just hire people off the street who think great warm and fuzzy thoughts about religion. I hired scholars who knew their stuff and who know things I will never know.

Now the state department is very hierarchical. It's a very obedience-driven culture. It's a very male dominated and I learned that all very quickly. So in that sense, because I worked for the secretary, I'm located in a very nice piece of real estate. As I say, it's easier to get forgiveness than permission and I'm probably right against the edge of that right now. So I was born in a very nice place in the bureaucracy. I did not work my way up through the State Department. Yet the State Department always toggles between the long view and this morning's newspaper

headlines. And the problem is that if you get completely absorbed in the headline of the day you just become crisis managers. Part of that has to be your job. But if you look at LGBTQ rights, if you look at climate change, if you look at anti-corruption, if you look at anti-microbial resistance, these are thick global problems that take generations to solve. So in three years, I'm not going to figure that out but maybe we move the margins of those problems in slightly better ways.

It's not just all about deliverables for our boss in the next 48 hours. Ultimately, what I would leave behind is a well-functioning, well-conceived office of a higher form. And when I walk out of the building, which I hope is not tonight, but maybe the end of the presidential term, but if they fire me tonight, I would be proud of the team I built, the vision we have constructed to keep our eye on point, but to also deal with the short-term realities of the planet that comes up from time to time. And that's actually kind of the vision I had from the beginning. We dropped some issues that proved not to be effective. We've had very interesting, complicated ones that's popped up on our screen almost every night. The refugee crisis, for instance. We're doing amazing things on refugees, which I'll talk about this evening. But when I had moved into the building in July 2013, nobody had spoken about a European refugee crisis.

**Kem Sawyer:**

I want to reference a photograph that Nick Street showed us earlier this afternoon of the mosque. It's of women in a mosque that is also used as a synagogue. And a week or so ago the *Washington Post* ran a religion feature about Brookville church on Long Island and I thought I might just mention this article since not everybody here reads the *Washington Post*. This is a church founded in 1782 on Long Island, now home to three faiths as well as a fourth, an interfaith community. The sign outside reads, "The Muslim Reform Movement Organization, the New Synagogue of Long Island and Interfaith Community of Long Island." The Reverend Vicki Easlin, who is there, says, "The aim is not to blend the religions, but to demonstrate inclusivity." Sarah Corker, who grew up as a Lutheran and married a Conservative Jew, helped found the interfaith community. She says, "Our children are seeing this friendly, warm, loving, spiritual community, which is so different from what they see on the news and in the political arena right now. It's the strongest way to battle stereotypes."

I thought that was a good place to end and it also reminds me of your daughter's lunchroom.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Jon Sawyer  
Executive Director, Pulitzer Center

We are going to break, and thank you all for being very patient and attentive all day. We have covered a huge amount of ground. We will have drinks next door and food and we will recharge and come back at 6:00 for Shaun to tell us the rest of the story of his experience with the State Department. But first, I am really hoping that the recorder has worked all day, because we have covered a lot of rich material here and I am looking forward to editing that and making that available. We will certainly be getting it out to all of you.

For now, some quick highlights of the day:

This morning, Liu Jianqiang spoke on the practical effects of religious belief, talking about the Tibetan Buddhist practices that are protecting the headwaters of rivers that serve over a billion people in China alone and over 3 billion across Asia. Justin Catanoso shared powerful examples of faith, the environmental protection, and economic justice. Cynthia and her wonderful stories on the importance of understanding cultural differences, including why a Hindu father may see an arranged marriage as absolutely crucial to ensure the safety of the daughter he loves. It does not mean that you shouldn't try to change such practices but you have to begin with a sensitivity to the cultural and religious norms. Tom Hundley, talking about his own experiences in Indonesia and the importance of understanding why Indonesian women don't see their bodies as "belonging only to themselves." They come at it at a completely different cultural place from where we are and that understanding of the culture is a key prerequisite to understanding.

Lauren Herzog talked about her work with the Senegalese religious leaders and midwives, and using Twitter and other social media to promote better understanding of family planning. Laura Bassett's work from Kenya and the ripple effects of the Helms Amendment from 1973, the law that bars US foreign aid from going to any organization that provides abortion services, even in cases of rape, incest or protecting the life of the mother. She showed us the human face of that—the sixteen year old who was raped by the local politician and she ends up going to jail, and her family is just decimated financially as a result. We had the session this afternoon of Muslim assimilation and

integration. We saw John Bowen's sharp examples of racist policies across Europe. Genieve Abdo on the radically different immigrant experiences in the US of Arab Christians and Arab Muslims—and what that might teach us about our own attitudes and preconceptions. Sharrisa Ayuandini on Muslim women in the Netherlands who have had the hymenoplasty regeneration surgery—and why they insist that the decision is not driven by religion. Nick Street opened our eyes to the Muslim fringe, members of the LGBTQ community and others in Europe who do not get portrayed at all in the media portrayals of Muslim life—but that are far larger, and more positively engaged, than any of the jihadi groups that rule the headlines. The thousands of stories that, as Nick said, are not getting told—and why telling them is a solution to many of the problems we face. Maryam Kashani explored the parallels between the Muslim-American experience and that of African-Americans. And lastly, the discussion we just had on the global and the local, with Don Belt's examples from Pakistan of what happens when government and other institutions fail, whether it is the 2005 earthquake and how the jihadi groups did a much better job of responding to the needs of the people than the government, or the "ghost schools" of the government that function to give salaries to teachers who don't teach. No wonder then that parents looking for a better life for their children turn to madrassas, where teachers are often preaching jihad and extremism but at least have a commitment to educating their children. I want to thank Shaun Casey for ending the day on a positive note, with a hopeful message of the State Department experience that religion can be a force for good in an age of polarization. And to Marie Griffith, for showing how even during the worst experiences, including the one right here with the killing of Michael Brown, how that local religious groups forged new coalitions in search of finding good from bad. That is often the best that we can do but it is impossible to overestimate how important that effort is.

I want to thank you all for being here, for the great questions and for everybody coming together to participate in this. We look forward to hearing more from Shaun. So this isn't the last word. We are going to recharge and come back, but first one last word from John Bowen, who is about to go back to Europe after 24 hours or so at home.

John Bowen  
Department of Anthropology, Washington University

The only way to follow up a complete and eloquent summary of a hard day's work is to talk about the future rather than the past. So, I'm going to go back to Shaun's daughter's school cafeteria table. It is a great image. The problem isn't where you get the kids to the cafeteria table and they sit and they chat with each other, because in that case they already know each other and get along. The problem in so many public high school cafeterias is that everybody is at a different table. It is a real challenge, to our scholars as well as to people in the media, on figuring out how to get everyone to that common table. Not to force them to sit together, that won't work, what is it that got them together at that table day after day and they continue to chat with each other?

Well, there is something in social science literature called "The Contact Hypothesis." And the hypothesis is that when people have contact, they will get along. We know it is often true; it is often false. The real challenge for Contact Hypothesis research is figuring out what makes the difference. Brushing up against someone can irritate them just as much as it can provide an understanding. You know, "You talk funny" and that sort of thing. "You don't push in line the same way I push in line;" we have different ways of doing that. But when people work together, or they have some sort of a task to complete, then they have to figure out how to get it done. Maybe it is about being at a homeowner's association that is of the right size. Not 200 or so people, because then you have little factions, but maybe 25. Or maybe it is working in one of those offices in the State Department. Or maybe it is trying to get something passed in the local government, or maybe it is something very practical like fixing up the roof of a church or a mosque and somebody

has to hand the nails to the guy with the hammer or the woman with the hammer.

That seems to be what gets people to get along, but we still don't know very much about that. We still have general hypothesis and what we are lacking is context-rich research. The kinds of research that usually come from psychology experiments, the kind of context-rich research that some of us in religious studies, sociology, anthropology, or history do. But also getting it out to the broader public, to the policy community so it can be the base for more intelligent policy formulation and formation.

So the challenge is how to go both ways, how to draw on the very rich and effective reporting and add a scholarly component to that, something that makes sense to the reporter. Not "I will get back to you in a year" because that is not going to work, but "I can get back to you in four hours." I had to write a Time Magazine article and I get a call and the guy says, can you give me 450 words in four hours? I said, sure I can do that, and I did. It is the job of places like the Pulitzer Center and very few others to sort of help social scientists write in that way, with those quick turnaround times and communicating to a broader public. Then on the other side, it is the job of social scientists to seek out media people with whom they can talk and to whom they can say, what will help you make a better story? It is the great thing about the Pulitzer Center, people like Tom, Ann, Jon and others, that they have taken that on as a part of their mission. Already with our graduate students, they have been taught to write in a more media-friendly way and we hope that that collaboration will continue. So thanks to Jon and Tom and the rest of you for what you do, and for bringing us together here today.

# Evening Lecture: Shaun Casey

Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs, U.S. State Department

Introduction: James Wertsch  
Vice Chancellor, Washington University in St. Louis

I am James Wertsch, Vice Chancellor of International Affairs at Washington University, and also the Director at the McDonnell International Scholars Academy here and a long-time partner of sorts with the Pulitzer Center, including via our partnership on the Campus Consortium program. We have some award winners who are Washington University students with us tonight, people like Jae Lee who was an international student fellow with the Pulitzer Center this past year and whose work on health care in Uganda won national recognition from the Society of Professional Journalists. So yes, we are loaded with talent here.

We are really privileged here to have Shaun Casey give our last presentation of the day. Shaun is the U.S. State Department Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs. Shaun is from Missouri, so we have some local connections here, and I will tell you more in a little while that has to do with one of his heroes and mine, Reinhold Niebuhr. Among the many positions and awards and degrees that Shaun has received, he has the position, and I found this to be very interesting, as the Chair of the Public Understanding of Religion Committee at the American Academy of Religion. So I have learned about the kind of range of things that he does and the kind of service and leadership he provides to the United States.

For those of you at the Danforth Center I love this quote. “When Shaun was installed in 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry quipped, “If I had a chance to start college again, I would major in comparative religion.” So I think that we can expect our religious studies minors to double in the fall because Shaun has been here. So we already got our money’s worth, I would say. Shaun has been a leader in the State Department and many other places, and he has also been very active as a major scholar on religion in America. He has a 2009 book from Oxford University Press, “The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy Vs. Nixon 1960.” He is now co-editing “The Oxford Handbook of Political Theology.”

I would just like to say a couple words about someone who has the admiration of many of us in the room, but Shaun and I also

have and it binds us together, is Reinhold Niebuhr. Shaun spent some of his childhood, a great deal of his childhood in Missouri, as did Reinhold Niebuhr. So that is one thing that brings us together, but the book he is working on, the tentative title is *Niebuhr’s Children*, which if we are lucky, all of us are. I think that Niebuhr leads the way as being the 20th century’s greatest public intellectual as a theologian, and he was good at getting us to think about things that we don’t usually think about in the academy. Namely the sin of pride. We do not talk too much about sins at universities, but it makes sense in Niebuhr’s hands.

The limits of reason and rationality and other things we are not so good at, but that we really need, I think. The inherent selfishness of collective groups. Moral man and immoral society. These are lessons to be learned again and again. There was another wonderful little book by Reinhold Niebuhr, published in 1952, *The Irony of American History*, three years after the Soviets had exploded their first nuclear weapon. The new edition has a blurb by Barack Obama, written before he was president, that says, “Reinhold Niebuhr is my favorite philosopher.” So that is a good reason to buy it right there, but Shaun also uses it as a guide for what he is talking about here. Just one quote from there, that I go back to and use again and again, hopefully to guide myself as well as my academic research.

Early on in the book, Niebuhr writes about the surprise we all get when we are up to something that we don’t think we are up to. “We find it almost as difficult as a communist to believe that anyone could think ill of us” Niebuhr writes— and you could replace the word “communist” for something else today— “since we are as persuaded as they that our society is so essentially virtuous that only malice could prompt criticism of any of our actions.” Think about today, some seventy years later. We are still learning from Niebuhr. So we are very fortunate here today to have someone who wants to talk about some very interesting issues, but also thinks of us, or at least himself—and I would like to be included too—as Niebuhr’s Children. Welcome, Shaun.

# What's Religion Got to Do With Foreign Policy?

Shaun Casey  
Special Representative, Religion and Global Affairs,  
U.S. State Department

Well thank you for that warm greeting, it is always great to be in St. Louis, as I said earlier, and I would like to thank Washington University for being the cohost. I also want to thank Jon and Kem Sawyer for your hospitality. I was at your tenth anniversary a few weeks ago and I had an amazing time. It was a great celebration of what you have accomplished in your first decade. I remember Jon, I think our first conversation, probably back in 2009 or 2008, somewhere back then, and you were really just getting started. And you laid out this vision and I think that the mutual friend who had introduced us knew that you were wanting to do more work in the religion space, and I was doing a lot of work with reporters in my post at the Wesley Theological Seminary. I think we met at Kramerbooks, and that is a unique DC institution if you have never been to it, but I remember during our conversation thinking what an incredible vision you had, and I thought, "What are the odds that you are going to be able to pull this off?" You were a dreamer, but you also knew where you wanted to go. It was so gratifying to me to be there at your tenth anniversary thinking that you have done it. You have built this vision and it has grown, and I was particularly impressed by the educational component that you have built into this. You have not only collaborated to help journalists tell these amazing international stories that few outlets now have the resources to do, but you also have taken it on the road and shared it. I think the most poignant moment in New York for me was that the president of LaGuardia Community College was there. You were not thinking just the usual educational outlets but you were very democratic in your choice of academic partners. So thank you for that. It was really moving for me. And thank you for the invitation to be here today.

*We know that it will be better a year from now.* That is what the Syrian woman refugee, who had arrived just a few months prior to our meeting in this cramped stuffy conference room said to me, because she observed my disheartened expression. For an hour, one of the most heartbreaking and enriching hours of my time with the State Department, I had been meeting with newly arrived refugees in Jersey City, New Jersey. There were about 20 people in all, from about a dozen different countries that span the globe. Some had only been in the United States for a few days. Some, a month or two longer. But they were all still acclimatizing to their new home in America, and to all of the challenges that come with it. I heard stories from these refugees about the exorbitant cost of living in Jersey City, particularly housing. One refugee lamented how limited he was in finding work because he didn't speak English. Another young man shared that he was hired as a painter for a contracting

company making \$9 an hour. But the cost of transportation was about \$350 a month. Still another mentioned how in the current political climate, he worried about going to and from the mosque and he wondered if he was going to be harassed or even worse because he is a Syrian Muslim.

There were a few bright spots in that meeting in the Church World Services office in Jersey City on a cold December day. I met a rabbi, a priest and an imam. And that is not the beginning of a bad joke. They had not known each other previously before they joined forces to help support the refugee resettlement center. They were inspired to help refugees despite and in the midst of political pushback in the United States. They came together in partnership to help newly arriving individuals and families. But overall, my time in Jersey City was a poignant glimpse at the stark realities faced by refugees in their first days and months in this great country. Thus, the Syrian woman's comments in the very end of our hour, the reassurance that it would be better a year from now, brought some measure of hope and encouragement to me, the somewhat discouraged person in the room.

Now you may be wondering why Secretary Kerry's office of Religious Affairs is meeting with refugees in the US, especially since the State Department conventionally deals with foreign policy issues. It is actually a pretty interesting story. As a scholar, I am an alleged expert on public-private partnerships, when government works with a private company or civil society on initiatives or shared goals, yet when I came to the State Department back in July 2013, I was unaware of this public-private partnership that had existed for decades in the refugee resettlement space. To resettle refugees, the government works with international and intergovernmental agencies like the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization on Migration (IOM). It partners with nine national agencies with offices throughout the United States and overseas who help in the resettlement and replacement of refugees. It relies on an array of local networks: religious leaders and communities, NGO's, social service providers, school districts, police departments, municipal leaders and individual volunteers to make the resettlement process possible.

The success of the refugee resettlement process in the US has required the whole of society's collaboration. In my mind it is one of the best—and woefully under-told—good-news stories about the effect of public/private partnerships in our country. One of



of the primary resettlement agencies in Iowa. It has worked with the private sector to develop a mental and physical wellness program to ensure that refugees have the health support that they need to thrive. Lutheran Services in Iowa has converted donated farmland to institute a community-garden incubator farm program for refugees with an agricultural background. In Chicago, the Muslim Women's Resource Center has offered social services for people like Nasir, a Burmese refugee who washes dishes at a local casino by night but who by day is setting up a Rohingya cultural center to assist other refugee families. In Phoenix, organizations like Refugee Focus offer sewing classes as a part of its empowerment program for refugee women. It cooperates with the Downtown Phoenix Partnership to collect vinyl conference banners. Now I love that. I go to a lot of conferences and leave behind a lot of vinyl banners. These women reuse them and sew them into bags, which they then sell at local conventions. They are stunningly beautiful and stunningly well-made. Throughout the United States, there are organizations offering English language classes or senior programs so that refugees feel a part of the community and don't become isolated.

As a result of my travels around the US, I wholeheartedly agree with the Syrian woman I met who said, "I know it will be better a year from now." I have hope, because of the professionalism of the staff of the local resettlement organizations in the US, many of whom were once refugees themselves. They bring incredible linguistic skills and cultural expertise to their work. I have hope because even through the heavy anti-refugee rhetoric we hear in U.S. media and political discourse today, local refugee resettlement offices report that for every negative or hateful phone call that they receive there are at least five others from community members who are offering support. I have hope because in places like Chicago, almost every refugee and refugee family has a co-sponsor and group. A church, a synagogue, a mosque, or another family. There is a waiting list for those who are interested in sponsoring refugees in Chicago. I have hope, because I believe refugees enrich us economically and culturally. What makes America great is its diversity and along with that the resilience that comes with it. The work is not over, however. In the last three fiscal years the United States has welcomed 70,000 refugees a year. This fiscal year President Obama has committed to bringing in 85,000 refugees—and that at least 10,000 of them will be Syrian. We are facing unprecedented numbers of displaced people in the world, the likes of which we have not seen since World War II. These numbers appall me, every time that I read them. Currently, there are approximately 20 million refugees worldwide and 40 million internally displaced. To break that down, it is about one in every 122 people in the world is currently either a refugee or displaced.

The international community is currently seeing a refugee crisis of global proportions. Last year, the United States gave \$6 billion in humanitarian assistance contributions worldwide. We provided food and shelter, funded medical and hygiene services, and provided education for refugees and internally displaced people. A little over a week ago the US committed to giving over \$441 million of humanitarian assistance toward the 2016 global appeal of the UNHCR. The funding will protect the integration and resettlement of refugees and displaced people globally. Moreover, we are looking at how we—and this is out of my office—how we can leverage our experience in domestic refugee resettlement and assist our European counterparts who are facing even higher numbers than we are. Bringing together government officials, civil society representatives and other leaders to share their expertise and best practices and establish long-term partnerships between the US and Europe.

the little-known facts is that six of the nine refugee resettlement organizations with which the State Department cooperates, are religiously affiliated. When I learned this, I realized that I needed to get smarter on the refugee resettlement process and understand it from the local level. It is one thing to speak of issues like refugee resettlement from a perch in Washington, DC, where I read talking points written for me by another staffer and budget numbers and things like that. It is quite another to see refugee resettlement in action at the grassroots level. Over the past few months I have visited five different cities in the US, both large and small, to meet with refugees and hear their stories, learn of the incredible work of local resettlement offices, and provide support to local religious communities and others who are so integral to the success of arriving refugees.

Even lesser known is the fact that refugees receive only an initial 30 to 90 days of support from the State Department. They really do hit the ground running. Within the first few days, they have applied for Social Security cards, they have gone to cultural resettlement classes and enrolled their children in school. Within the first few weeks, they learn how to use public transportation and will start to learn English. Within the first few months, most refugees are working, paying taxes and contributing to Social Security. Within five years, most refugees become US citizens. A few days ago in Chicago I met with Yousef, an Iraqi refugee who had been in the US for five years. He works 90 hours a week in two different jobs as a home healthcare aid and in food service. Recently he took the oath to become an American citizen, an experience he said was one of the most emotional and moving of his life. Yousef told me, "I still believe in the American dream."

The first 90 days of a refugee's life in the United States is an important yet brief waypoint. Refugees often need extended support to grapple with all of the challenges and struggles of living in a new country. The resettlement process works because it is driven by the local communities. Since 2005, the US has welcomed 3.2 million people, living up to our values of compassion, generosity and leadership. It is local communities, NGO's, resettlement offices, communities, volunteers and others who have devised innovative programs to support and help refugees. For example, I was in Des Moines recently visiting USCRI (the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants), one

Now I would be remiss if I do not raise the issue that many Americans have brought up with whom I have spoken to during my travels, and that is the issue of security. There is considerable misinformation about the security-screening process that refugees undergo. Refugees are the most thoroughly screened of any type of traveler to the United States. I have family and I have friends and I want to keep them safe, just like I suspect do all of the local citizens with whom I have spoken. But there is a need for more education of the security-screening process for refugees. This too is where local communities are vital to the resettlement and the integration process in the US: in breaking down walls, where there are forces in the public discourse that want to enflame conversations and not to welcome people, and where there is the potential for hateful rhetoric, particularly anti-Muslim bigotry.

In the Office of Religion and Global Affairs I work alongside three other special representatives and envoys in our office: the Special Office to Combat and Monitor anti-Semitism, directed by Ira Foreman; the Acting Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Arsalan Suleman; and the Special Representative to Muslim Communities, Shaarik Zafar. During Shaarik's recent trip to various countries, primarily in Europe, government officials, reporters and civil society leaders, notably young people, have raised their concern about anti-Muslim sentiment that they hear about in the United States. Major media outlets identified the current refugee crisis as one of the most significant happenings in 2015, along with COP21 and the historic Paris Climate agreement signed at the end of the year.

Like the refugee resettlement space, each of these issues intersects in some ways with religion. I know this because our office is engaged in some way on all of them and many more. And you may have heard me tell some stories about other specific examples. The Pew Center reported that in 2012, there were roughly 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe, representing about 80% of the world's population. I am very pleased that Secretary Kerry will be giving a major speech tomorrow at Rice University on religion and foreign policy. He will discuss how religious communities and actors drive and shape social and political changes and play a wide range of roles in societies. I have been privileged to advance his vision and along with my staff of 30 work to identify and showcase the many ways, the full spectrum of religious traditions in U.S. foreign policy issues and interests. Religion is relevant to many foreign policy priorities, not only those with an explicit religious dimension. The Office of Religious and Global Affairs was created almost three years ago to help assess religious dynamics and to help post and engage religious groups and communities, to make them more successful in achieving our diplomatic objectives. In dealing with the refugee crisis as with other issues I believe we have a proven track record and I know that our office will only grow and improve. I am a rare species in Washington, a political appointee, which means that my tenure ends on January 20, 2017. But I am confident the path that we forged will better integrate religious actors and dynamics into our foreign policy conversations and I know that our office will be better a year from now and a year from that and a year after that. Thank you very much.

**Audience question:**

This is a question about scale. With millions of displaced refugees, you say that we are only hoping to bring in 85,000 refugees this fiscal year. Why aren't we doing more?



**Shaun Casey:**

It is a bit of an ironic story. Prior to the refugee crisis in Europe, we were accepting more refugees than anyone, at 70,000 a year. But suddenly you are talking about 800,000 or talking about a million. The problem is that we simply don't have the capacity. In other words, if we do the security background checks that we historically have done, those cannot be done overnight. We currently do not have the resources to take another 500,000 in one calendar year. The cap went from 70,000 to 100,000 so that is a 40% increase in two fiscal years; that is negotiated between the president and the Congress. So it is not simply an executive decision by the president. It is a political decision that has to be made with the powers that be in DC. So sure, we can say that what the US has done is not enough, that going from 70,000 to 100,000 is insufficient to deal with the tsunami of refugees that have come, but I would say that it is better than no increase. Also, as the President and John Kerry have said, ultimately our solution to the refugee flow is a political solution in the space itself. In other words, unless there is a political settlement there of some sort, there is no end in sight, in terms of the flow of refugees. So it is a vexed space. I do not think anyone actually says that what we are doing is sufficient enough to help the refugees. But given the political circumstances, going from 70,000 to 100,000 is in some ways a remarkable political achievement given the ethos that we are in.

Part of what we have to do then is to look to Europe and try to address the root causes—but also to help Europe develop its capacity, because frankly Germany doesn't have a system in place to resettle the hundreds of thousands who have shown up there. If we can bring some of the expertise we have here to help them develop some capacity, and security, because as we have seen it is a diabolically complex issue for the Europeans right now. I wish I could tell you that we can snap our fingers and then suddenly welcome 500,000 refugees into the United States, but given the circumstances that we are operating under, the increase to 100,000 is, frankly, not bad.

**Audience question:**

How does the government go about setting target numbers for immigration in general, especially given the economic impact that might have?

**Shaun Casey:**

Well, I need to separate the difference between immigration and refugees. So historically, the president negotiates that cap with congress. If you were to Google “refugees,” you would see that immediately after 9/11, the number plummeted almost to zero. It has been a steady growth in capacity. 70,000 was the cap, President Obama only reached that three years ago, and then last year he negotiated the increase to 85,000 and then 100,000. But that is a conversation the president has with Congress. That is where that cap is negotiated.

**What are the factors they discuss?**

I am not in those meetings. The only thing I can do is simply announce the outcome. As far as I know, there is no public transcript of that conversation between the president and congressional leaders.

**Is it an act of Congress?**

No, it is not an act of legislation. Again, I am not sure who the exact leaders are on the congressional side.

**Is it budgetary or just an inability to process?**

Again, I do not know, I was not in the room. So I really do not want to speculate on what was debated by the different people around the table. It is interesting to wonder what that discussion might have been, but we do not know.

**Audience question:**

So just to follow on this, because I guess it’s related to the question I had. I recognize this is a totally separate from immigration from your point of view and from actual practice, but I think for all of us the question is: How have you managed to achieve what you’re achieving at the same time there’s all this growing anti-immigrant sentiment? How does that happen? How does the Congress allow you to add those numbers on the refugee side while at the same time folks are saying these really egregious things about immigration generally? How do those things happen?

**Shaun Casey:**

Well, I mean, that’s a great question, and I’m quite grateful the State Department doesn’t deal with immigration laws. As you know, going back to 2007 in President Bush’s era, he tried in Congress to get an immigration reform and ultimately his own party didn’t vote for the bill. That’s a much more complicated space in the sense that the refugee system has been working since 1946. The UN Convention on Refugee status was passed in 1951. The UN set up a global refugee system of which we are a part. We approved that UN convention along with 100 other countries. So there we have a global system that’s been operating for 60-odd years. Now some people may argue that that needs to be reformed again. But it’s distinct from the general immigration system. If you know anything about our immigration system you know that it’s a patchwork of laws that has evolved over time. Nobody likes that system. Nobody defends the status quo and Congress has got to start all over, which is really a huge lift. In the refugee space, the only thing they really had to do was negotiate a cap, which itself is vastly complicated, no doubt. So the policy is much simpler on the refugee side than on the immigration side.

**Audience question:**

Do you get the same kind of pushback against refugees that people get on immigration?

**Shaun Casey:**

I don’t think that Americans know the story, and I’m not blaming anybody. I’m not blaming the media. You know, I probably could blame the media. I probably shouldn’t have said that. I blame the media. It’s just a story that’s not told. So between these five centers I went to, for instance, they resettle—if I did the math right—between those five centers almost 10 percent of all the refugees resettled in the US. Now there are 175 other resettlements and most of them are really quite small. I don’t think most Americans have the slightest idea. If you were to draw a circumference of 75 miles around St. Louis, I have no earthly idea how many refugees have been resettled in this area in the last 10 years and my guess is that a lot of people are happy the number isn’t known, right?

**Audience question:**

But the fact that it takes flying under the radar, I think, is significant.

**Shaun Casey:**

But no, I do think that you really do shine a bright spotlight on a very odd part of our policy right now. So you look on the local level. I mean, I was in Des Moines. Des Moines, Iowa is just this incredible center of refugees. And refugee resettling there goes back decades. Vietnamese were welcomed there by the then-governor, I guess it was back in the 70s. There’s also deep, deep civic pride in the fact that we have Bosnians here in St. Louis, as many as 40,000 or 50,000. And yet you might be able to start a fight on immigration on any street corner in some of these same cities. So go figure.

**Audience question:**

What is the connection of what you do with the actual refugee camps?

**Shaun Casey:**

The refugee camps are run by UNHCR, so the U.S. government doesn’t run refugee camps around the world. So let’s say the UNHCR decides you’re in a camp and now you’re eligible to move on. Then there is a sort of sorting process about where you are going to go. And the U.S. commitment is to try and resettle the most vulnerable, which I think is a very noble goal. But then there are certain criteria that apply. Obviously you have to go through the security process. If you have family members already in the US that is advantageous to you, the feeling being that if the people you know in the States already walked this road then they will help you when you land here. And so once the UN says this is the cohort that will go to the US, this is the cohort that will go somewhere else, the nine contracting partners who work with the State Department look at that list of people—where they are from, and their story and background—and let’s say it’s the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. They say, “We know him because we know his family members. We run the resettlement center in Phoenix.” Then they may literally pick you to come to their center. So the nine agencies collaborate together to see if there are existing connections already for a refugee who’s in process. The American agencies basically sort

the refugees they get from the global UNHCR system.

**Audience question:**

Is there a capacity for the US to absorb many more refugees than we currently allow? Is there a way to resolve this?

**Shaun Casey:**

I'm not saying that. I would not be surprised if that's true given what I've seen. In fact, I ask this question when I go to the five centers. I say, "Look, nationally we've increased our goal 40 percent. Do you have the capacity to actually resettle that many people?" And first there will be a kind of big gulp on the part of the staff people and then they kind of dart eyes around the room and then say, "Yeah, we can do that."

I don't think anybody really knows. I don't think anybody in the country can put a number down and say, "Yes, it's 150,000. It's 200,000. Or no, 100,000 is the most." So I'm not saying I think the capacity could grow. I'm saying that's an interesting question and it should be put to the actual refugee resettlement people. Now what I should say too is that when I was in Dallas, visiting a center run by the Catholic Charities, I said, "What do you do when the money runs out? What happens when the figure the State Department gives gets zeroed out? How long do you stay in relationship with families?" And they say five, six years. As long as it takes. They make up the difference in their own fundraising. So my guess is the amount of money they actually spend far exceeds the money from the federal government. Now, states also provide money. State governments have social safety networks and things like that.

So my intuition is yes, we could increase capacity. What is the limit on that capacity? I have no technical answer to answer that. But your second, more important question is that this is obviously a political judgment. If we're going to increase the number, that's got to be a political judgment. Let me just add I am prohibited by law from lobbying for any particular piece of legislation so do not hear me tell you to go call Senator so-and-so. I'm just trying to explain the way the system actually works.

**Audience question:**

Do you know of any refugee camps that may close because there are too many people?

**Shaun Casey:**

I really don't. If you were to go to the UNHCR website that would be the place where you could find any information in terms of the capacity or even the closings. That's really not my business, so I don't think I could answer that question.

**Audience question:**

I want to hear more about Niebuhr's children, the book project, and your reflections on the lessons of Reinhold Niebuhr.

**Shaun Casey:**

Well that's a great question. Niebuhr obviously has a lot of problems. He needs to be interpreted and critically appropriated in the 21st century. Niebuhr was a dialectical thinker. He basically said human beings sort of live between two poles. One is the reality affirmative: We grow old and we die. Some of us die before we get to grow old. But on the other hand, we also think

in terms of transcendence. We're never satisfied with what we have. We can envision a better, more just world. And we live sort of between those two poles.

Niebuhr's criticism was of people who only live on one pole. He was concerned about those who say life sucks and then you die. This is all it is and it's only going to get worse—or on the other hand the wild dreamer who says we can build utopia here one brick at a time. He said both of those poles are wrong, taken empirically, he would argue, or philosophically and theologically.

So I'm two thirds of the way through a book manuscript that I have not touched in the last two and a half years. What I trace, if you look at the case for the Iraq War when it first broke out, everybody was invoking Niebuhr. The neocons invoked Niebuhr. The liberals were invoking Niebuhr. J.B. Owen, my dear friend, was invoking Niebuhr almost out of the shoot. And what the neocons were saying is, "Perpetual war and conflict is all there's ever been and that will ever be. So you folk who don't like the war? Get over it. This is just a fact of human history." And then the other people were sort of saying, "This is all just a big misunderstanding. Let's just sit down and sing a few songs and bear hug each other and all this unpleasantness will go away."

And so what I show is that the second and third generation of Niebuhrism is split into two camps rather than holding the tension between these observations that we are limited human beings. We can't solve all the world's problems in the next 24 hours—and the other people who just dream, who transcend and think there is no injustice that can't be corrected with just a couple of good thoughts or teachings or something, they're not correct, either.

And I really see the wisdom of maintaining that tension now. You look at what's happened in the State Department. In the short time I've been there we've had the rise of ISIL, the refugee crisis, we've seen global climate change and its impacts proliferating on a daily basis. We are facing some truly horrific global problems. I'm not content saying that's the way it was or has always been, that we just have to learn how to survive it. And I'm also not content with people who say there are just easy answers to this if we just think harder or offer a few more residence degrees. So you have to muddle between those two.

But I think Niebuhr believed that real moral and real policy progress was possible. He wasn't simply saying wring your hands in anxiety because it's always going to be this way. And I think if he were alive today he would argue against the sort of dystopian realists who say the world is going to hell in a hand basket and there's nothing we can do about it. I think he would argue the other pole, the search for transcendence, the search for approximate justice, is really where we need to be leaning today. Look at what's playing in the movies today. Walk into a video game store and see all the dystopian themes there where it seems to be crumbling. That seems to be kind of the dominant narrative today and I think Niebuhr would argue against that.

Now that was a very theoretical book that I was writing before I joined the State Department. Now once I get back to that I think it's going to be salted with some anecdotes because I really think we are making progress on climate change. We do have the UN Paris framework. It's not perfect, but we have economic growth and we have carbon outputs decreasing in some countries, so it's theoretically possible to have a growing economy and a lowering of your carbon footprint. Will we embrace that in time? It certainly is the question of the hour. I want to believe the Huntington Clash of Civilizations theory is wrong. The rise

of ISIL may be a challenge to my assessment on that, but I believe I would much rather try to sort it in a way that doesn't place a million U.S. troops on the ground in Syria or Northern Iraq today. And in that sense I'm in deep sympathy with what President Obama has chosen on that front.

So I look forward to the day I get back to that manuscript and maybe weave in some real life experiences and it won't be purely an academic theoretical. But I have to say, I do think if you look at the foreign policy of this administration, while it is far from perfect, I think on the whole we've achieved some pretty good victories. We still have nine months left, so we'll see what other rabbits we can pull out of the hat.

**Audience question:**

If a future President Clinton asked you to stay on, would you?

**Shaun Casey:**

I get this question a lot and no, I won't, because at the end of the day I'm an academic and if I walk out at the end of the administration I will have had a three-and-a-half-year tour, which is amazing. And I will have built an office. I'm very proud of what we accomplished. I'm very proud of what we built. I have utter confidence in the staff I'm leaving behind. Three and a half years is enough. I want to go back to the classroom. I want to reengage graduate students. And I've got new research agendas as a result of this. I've got stories I want to tell. It's been a remarkable journey. I wouldn't trade this for anything, but it's been quite liberating to know I turn into a pumpkin at midnight.

So I'm psychologically and professionally getting ready for that. There's real liberation that comes from that and I'm sure whoever the next Secretary of State is, if it is in fact a Clinton administration, will pick somebody smarter who is able to build on the foundation we've laid and move this office to greater heights so I'm really quite at peace with having a three-and-a-half-year gig. And at the end of the day, I am a teacher. I miss the classroom. I was at a classroom at the University of Chicago again when we were at Chicago in October, and my staffer who went with me is also a University of Chicago graduate. She said, "You were having a lot of fun back there. Did you realize that?" And I said "Yeah, I realize that." So I miss the classroom. I'm eager to get back.

# CREDITS

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