



LOIS ROTH FOUNDATION

FOR CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE

2025 ANNUAL REVIEW



Program Year
2024 – 2025

Fulbright & Academic Collaborations

Fulbright Distinguished Lecture. In June 2024, journalist and author **Dr. Fareed Zakaria** delivered the Fulbright Distinguished Lecture, hosted by the Oxford Department of Politics and International Relations and Pembroke College, where Senator J. William Fulbright studied from 1924-28. Zakaria, author of five highly regarded books and winner of a Peabody Award for his weekly news show, addressed his current research: “Toward a Post-American International Order.”

Project Support Awards

Supporting (mostly) Fulbrighters—both American and international—to enrich and expand their projects in the field.

Australia. Studying Australian strategies to counter the crisis in mental healthcare provider burnout, **Malvika Narayan** will host a virtual symposium to connect teams conducting parallel studies at her host and home universities, building a forum for concrete dialogue and dissemination of findings in the two countries.

Denmark. (With the American Scandinavian Foundation) Advocating for the repatriation of indigenous art, **Dr. Bart Pushaw** worked with the Nuuk Art Museum, Inuit scholars, and community stakeholders in Greenland to co-create knowledge about Inuit art and culture. Pushaw is completing the first comprehensive study in 40 years of Greenlandic Inuit art produced from 1680-1900.

Ecuador. Two awards supported US Fulbrighters in Ecuador. Focusing on indigenous construction techniques, **Derek Russell** convened a pluri-national Indigenous Craft Council of artisans to share their techniques and knowledge about indigenous construction. **Marielle Buxbaum** used theater to work with Ecuadorian teens to process their own stories and promote stronger community.

Finland. For her MA in Social Sciences at Tampere University, **Megan Thiede** is addressing digital accessibility issues for the visually and cognitively impaired.

Morocco. For her dissertation *Singing Resilience in the Climate Crisis*, ethnomusicologist **Lydia Barrett** researched songs and community among women migrants from across African. Our grant funded a musical anthology album and companion website about the songs of women in migrant camps on Morocco’s northern coast.

Morocco. (International awardee) Doctoral student **Inass Esshir** is examining Moroccan storytelling and the work of Paul Bowles, an influential American who lived in Morocco for many years, studying its music and storytelling traditions. Our grant enabled her to expand her archival research into Bowles’s papers for a critical reevaluation of the author.

New Zealand / Aotearoa. (International awardee) Jazz musician and composer **Phoebe Johnson** will expand her musical studies beyond what is available in her home country at The New School’s interdisciplinary performer-composer MA program.

Norway. Through interviews with probation staff and incarcerated individuals, **Ben Branaman** studied the impact of Electronic Monitoring—an alternative criminal sentencing practice—on life outcomes, public safety, and human rights.

Sweden. At the Boda Glasbruk Glass Factory, artist **Serafina Kennedy** mastered Graal, a traditional glassblowing technique, creating a series of ink drawings and Graal sculptures that were exhibited in Sweden and at Rutgers University. **Nicole Tong** studied discrimination faced by indigenous Sámi people, with an emphasis on privacy and data, in her effort to develop “ethical” AI systems.

The Lois Roth Foundation relies entirely on individual gifts to support its work. Your generous contribution is greatly appreciated.

Uruguay. Climate-inspired changes to cattle grazing regulations are affecting the lives of both cattle-farming and other rural families. **Juliana Merullo** developed an oral history archive to document their experiences. Her award enabled her to share these stories on Uruguayan radio and in English-language podcasts.

Literature & Translation

Arabic Literature Tour. Over 12 days this fall, Moroccan author **Yassin Adnan** and US translator **Alexander Elinson** (CUNY Grad School) presented the novel *Hot Maroc* at over ten colleges and universities in the northeastern U.S. This darkly comedic story, set in early-2000s Marrakesh, follows Rahhal—painfully shy, not that bright or popular, and armed with a useless degree in ancient Arabic poetry—as he becomes an actor in the emerging online universe.

Dyankov Prize. This year, two translators of English-language novels into Bulgarian were honored. **Elka Videnova** won the Grand Prix for her translation of *Night Boat to Tangier* (2019), by award-winning Irish author Kevin Barry. The Special Award went to **Iglika Vassileva** for her translation of J.M. Coetzee’s *The Masters of Petersburg* (1994).

MLA-Roth Award. The 18th MLA-Roth Award for Translation of a Literary Work went to **Paul Reitter** (OSU) for a new translation of Karl Marx’s *Capital: Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1* (Princeton UP, 2024), based on the last German version Marx edited. There were also two Honorable Mentions: For **Alex Gil** (Yale) for Aimé Césaire’s *And the Dogs Were Silent / Et les chiens se taisaient* (Duke UP, 2024), a bilingual edition of Césaire’s lost play about the Haitian Revolution; and for **Fiona Graham** for Elin Anna Labba’s *The Rocks Will Echo Our Sorrow: The Forced Displacement of the Northern Sámi* (UMN Pr., 2024), which chronicles a dark chapter in Scandinavia’s arctic indigenous history and won Sweden’s most important national book prize.

Persian Translation Prize. Two prizes are being awarded to recognize both senior and emerging translators of modernist Persian literature. The first goes to Prof. em. **M.R. Ghanoonparvar** (UT Austin) for his translation of Ghazaleh Alizadeh’s two-volume novel *The House of the Edrisis* (1991-2) (Syracuse UP). The second goes to *The Shape of Extinction* (Asemama Books), a collection of Bijan Jalali’s minimalist poems, by poet **Abeeda Shahid Talukder** and **Aria Fani** (UWash), which masterfully conveys Jalali’s meditative style.

Bulgarian Arts Exchange. In June 2025, we supported the interdisciplinary CapitalLiterature Festival in Sofia. Exploring the theme “Paradise Lost/Regained,” it opened literature to the public and professionals across the arts through 14 events, including talks, concerts, quizzes, workshops, and readings. The festival honored US graphic novelist Art Spiegelman, opening with an interview with Vladimir Poleganov, the Bulgarian translator of *Maus*, and closing with the Bulgarian premiere of the 2024 documentary *Art Spiegelman: Disaster Is My Muse*.

Cultural Diplomacy

Eleven exemplary cultural diplomats were recognized by the US State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) on August 21, 2025. The Lois Roth Award honors US Foreign Service Officers; the Ilchman-Richardson Award recognizes Washington-based ECA Staff; and the Gill Jacot-Guillarmod Award and Jodie Lewinsohn Career Achievement Awards go to locally employed Cultural Affairs Specialists working on behalf of the U.S. abroad. In addition, we presented our Citizen’s Award for Cultural Diplomacy for the first time since 2019.

Lois Roth Award. The award went to **Johnny O. Hishmeh** for his work in the Venezuela Affairs Unit (operating from Bogota, Colombia since 2019). His efforts to design educational programs have created 26 new US-Venezuelan university partnerships and set the stage for future collaboration. Hishmeh exemplifies Lois Roth’s legacy in the patience, wisdom, and generosity with which he supports the

the Caracas team in developing sustainable cross-cultural programs.

An Honorable Mention went to **Nicole Finnemann**, Public Affairs Officer at the Consulate in Barcelona, for demonstrating superior innovation and cultural sensitivity in advancing US cultural diplomacy. Her creative initiatives have connected women entrepreneurs across Europe, linked Spanish biotech researchers with US counterparts, and engaged Latin American communities in the U.S. as vital cultural bridges informing policy.

Ilchman-Richardson Award. The award went to **Britta Bjornlund**, Chief of the Youth Programs Division, for her clear and compassionate leadership of government-sponsored academic and youth exchange programs, while addressing momentous program challenges and prioritizing participant safety and welfare.

An Honorable Mention went to **Linda Piccirilli**, of the International Visitor Leadership Program’s New York Branch, for her deft management of thousands of projects that have shaped the lives of tens of thousands of emerging global leaders.

Gill Jacot-Guillarmod Award. This award went to **Shahid Waseem** at the Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, whose leadership in creating a Pakistan-US Alumni Network resulted in invaluable tools—useful for all agencies—to help dispel inaccurate perceptions of others, sustain high-level dialogue, and build relationships with key contacts.

An Honorable Mention went to **Charlene Wantong** at the US Embassy in Yaoundé, Cameroon, a visionary leader who embodies the ethos of educational and cultural diplomacy rooted in creativity, empathy, and strategic thinking. Through her mentorship, she has skillfully transformed disparate alumni groups into coordinated, self-sustaining networks that organize events and engage broader youth participation.

GJG Career Achievement Awards.

Alev Alemdar, specializing in Established Opinion Leaders at the Consulate in Istanbul, Türkiye, has provided 27 years of unwavering service in cultural and educational diplomacy with integrity, impact, and sustained excellence.

Naimeh Hadidi, Senior Specialist for public engagement at the US Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, has helped drive the opening of Saudi Arabian society to the West, laying the groundwork for expanding the bilateral US-Saudi relationship.

Marion Salvanet, specializing in Public Engagement with Africa Regional Services at the US Embassy in Paris, has supported 27 French- and Portuguese-speaking posts in Africa, championing US values to African audiences, and mentoring and training a generation of international and US staff across the continent.

Mathias Tientcheu, also specializing in Public Engagement at the Embassy in Yaoundé, has long served as a cornerstone of US public diplomacy in Cameroon, exemplifying creative energy, cultural fluency, and mentorship that has made an enduring impact on his colleagues, communities, and institutions.

Citizen’s Award for Cultural Diplomacy. For the first time since 2019, we presented this occasional award in recognition of a major cultural diplomatic impact achieved by an individual. The ceremony, held at the Bulgarian Embassy, honored Elizabeth Kostova for her work with EKF, the foundation she co-founded to connect Bulgarian authors and translators with literary circles around the world. Over almost twenty years, this work has significantly changed and revitalized Bulgaria’s cultural scene.

Visit our website for more details:
www.loisrothfoundation.org

LOIS ROTH FOUNDATION

FOR CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE

DIRECTORS

Skyler J. Arndt-Briggs,
Chair, Treasurer

Anne V. Barbaro,
Vice Chair, Secretary

Rosalie N.L. Arndt

Deborah Cohn

Marti Estell

Amy Forest

Stephanie Hallock

Lisa Helling

William A. Rivera

FRIENDS, FOUNDERS* & DIRECTORS EMERITI

Richard T. Arndt*

Robert C. Bemis

Bert Brandenberg

Martin C. and Faye Carroll

Harriet Mayor Fulbright (1933 – 2023)

Michael A. Gellman

Robert R. Gosende

Evelyn Swarthout Hayes* (1912 - 2000)

David A. Johnson (1935 – 2022)

Elizabeth J. Kostova

Jodie Lewinsohn (1931 – 2023)

Jill E. McGovern

Henry A. Millon* (1927 – 2018)

Steven Muller* (1927 – 2013)

Shawn O’Reilly

Patti McGill Peterson

Anne O. Thomson

Robin W. Winks* (1930 – 2003)

Jeffery Yablon

11592 Newport Cove Lane | Reston, VA 20194
www.loisrothfoundation.org

For annual giving or bequests, call 202-810-3806
or email give@loisrothfoundation.org.