



Jordan Journeys

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MSC L.T. JORDAN INSTITUTE

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VENEZUELA: FIGHTING OPPRESSION IN A STARVING NATION

By: Javier Santana '19

On March 3, 2020, the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness partnered with the Venezuelan Student Association (VSA) to host the Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States, Carlos Vecchio, who spoke on the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela. The event was moderated by Dr. Mathias Poertner, an Assistant Professor of International Affairs in the Bush School of Government and Public Service. Over 600 Aggies filled Rudder Theatre to hear the discussion, making this the largest event of its kind the Ambassador has been a part of in the United States.

The conversation on March 3 began with Mr. Vecchio's upbringing: he grew up in a small Venezuelan town where his parents taught him the value of education. He would eventually receive the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship and postgraduate degrees in law from Georgetown and in public administration from Harvard. The Ambassador explained that after returning to Venezuela during the administration of then-president Hugo Chávez, he "saw a man dismantling our democracy." He co-founded a political party in opposition to the Chávez government, and his role as a leader of a peaceful protest movement led Chávez's successor, Nicolás Maduro, to issue a warrant



for his arrest. After going into hiding, Mr. Vecchio shared how an ultrasound image of his unborn child convinced him that he had to go into exile. His son was born here in the United States, where Ambassador Vecchio has been the foremost activist for Venezuelan democracy and human rights ever since.

The discussion was followed by a Q&A with the audience, where an attendee asked what those of us in the United States can do to help the Venezuelan people. The Ambassador's eyes lightened as he remarked that we were already doing the right thing by amplifying the voice of those who are suffering. He encouraged us to support Venezuela through advocacy in American politics, and shared his emblematic message of the night: "You, young people, you are not the future. You are the present, and if you want change you have to be part of that change. Nobody's going to give you that change."

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

It is a privilege to have spent the last three years with the MSC Leland T. and Jessie W. Jordan Institute for International Awareness. This past year, I have watched our committee become a community, supported our students to grow as leaders, and seen hundreds of individuals impacted by our programs.

In the Fall, we partnered with the International Studies Russian Language Program to host Russian and Eurasian Studies in Texas Today, a conference by the Texas Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, and the annual Russian Film Festival, highlighting Putin's Witnesses and welcoming the film's producer to campus. We collaborated with MSC OPAS to bring SEVEN, an L.A. Theatre Works stage-play highlighting the lives of "seven remarkable women ... [who brought] heroic changes to their home countries." This Spring, we welcomed Venezuelan Ambassador Carlos Vecchio at

Venezuela: Fighting Oppression in a Starving Nation with the Venezuelan Student Association. Coffee Breaks With L.T. Jordan will be a series of online posts through April discussing the intersectional effects of coffee consumption and is a collaboration with the Borlaug Institute's Center for Coffee Research and Education. The International Education Outreach program remains committed to impacting students in the Bryan-College Station area, and we continue to support the Brazos Valley Worldfest.

Throughout the year, we supported students going abroad through the Overseas Loan Fund, the Internship and Living Abroad Program, the International Service Program, and the Jordan Fellows program. Dr. Sue '94 and Mr. Patrick '71 Mahoney agreed to generously support our interns financially for the second year and will offer the same opportunity next year.



Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with joy, pride, and gratitude. I joined the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute as a freshman because I believed in the importance of international awareness: learning about other people from other places is learning about empathy. We have brought this to our community this year. I am grateful for the dedication and passion our staff has shown, and I am proud of the programs and community they continue to build. I cannot wait to see where the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute will go next.

Yours,

Kalista Jordan-DeBruin

Kalista Jordan-DeBruin '21

2019-20 MSC L.T. Jordan Chair

INTERNSHIP AND LIVING ABROAD PROGRAM (ILAP)

By: Aleksandra Williams '21

The MSC L.T. Jordan Institute's Internship and Living Abroad Program (ILAP) gives students the opportunity to intern abroad at organizations related to their major or future career goals for six weeks during the summer. Internships are available in England, Chile, China, Singapore, and Spain. While these internships provide professional skills to our participants, they also provide a cultural experience that allows students to learn about other cultures in a unique way. This is done through homestays and cultural excursions to other regions of the countries they are visiting. An

example of this can be seen with our students that stay in England. They are located in the city of London, but their excursion is to the smaller country town of Yorkshire. This excursion allows our participants to experience the busy city life but also the more rural lives of those that live outside of the city. One of last year's participants, Ethan Beauregard, said that he "enjoyed the excursion to York[shire] because it allowed [him] to see the differences in British culture from the big city of London to the countryside of York".

FELLOWS CLASS OF 2019-20 BIOGRAPHIES

By: Miguel Esparza '20

The Fellows Program provides funding opportunities for highly qualified graduate and undergraduate students to conduct their research abroad. This year, the Fellow's 32nd class consists of six PhD students: Masatoshi Kuniyoshi, Sarah Brinkley, Kaiyi Zhang, Jaclyn Martin, Kenneth Masloski, and Lauren Jones.

Masatoshi Kuniyoshi is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology. He visited Okinawa, Japan in December 2019 to collect local newspaper articles. His goal was to assess how the social framework presented affects the way in which people collectively remember the 1995 sexual assault against an 11-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl by three U.S. soldiers. This research highlights the memory of Okinawan people in contemporary Japan.

Sarah Brinkley is a PhD student in the Department of Horticultural Science. Sarah will travel to western Colombia to collaborate with the Centro Internacional de Tropical and Parque Tecnológico de Innovación del Café to design a study to evaluate soil and coffee quality under shade trees. This research will aid international and Colombian coffee farmers.

Kaiyi Zhang is a PhD student in the Department of Geosciences. She will be traveling to Germany to work with the Department of Hydrology at the University of Bayreuth. She will evaluate groundwater vulnerability to antibiotics contamination by modeling the transportation of contaminants through the vadose zone using the software HYDRUS.

Jaclyn Martin is currently a PhD student in the Department of Entomology. She will travel to Cali, Colombia to study the rice delphacid, an insect pest of rice native to Latin America and invasive to Texas. She will work with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture to investigate how this insect will respond to the Texas climate and explore which rice varieties will be most resistant to it.

Kenneth Masloski is currently a PhD student in the Department of Entomology. He is seeking to travel to Beijing, China. His work focuses on the importation of biological control of crapemyrtle bark scale, a non-native pest of crapemyrtle trees in Texas. He wishes to study this insect in its native range and gather information otherwise unavailable to him in Texas.

Lauren Jones is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology. She will travel to Scotland to collect ancient DNA from archaeological human bones. She'll be looking for genetic markers of disease resistance to better inform modern-day disease response.

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAM (ISP)

By: Laura Roots '22

The International Service Program is a unique and culturally immersive experience that provides students the opportunity to serve small communities in either Belize or Costa Rica. The program focuses on high-achieving undergraduate and graduate students with an interest in the environmental, public health, and marine conservation fields. It provides them a chance to develop their skills as internationally adept leaders through a life-changing experience.

The MSC L.T. Jordan Institute selected to send Natalie Coleman, a senior Civil Engineering major, and Griselda Manrique, a junior Biomedical Sciences major, to Costa Rica to work on a project about natural disaster evacuation routes. Additionally, they selected to send Emma Grace Tyson, a junior Industrial Distribution major, and Justin Chen, a freshman Biological Sciences major, to Belize to teach local students about the benefits of recycling.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAHONEYS

By: Javier Santana '19

Dr. Sue '94 and Mr. Patrick '71 Mahoney have been generously supporting the Internship and Living Abroad Program for three years. As former Aggies, they are committed to inspiring the next generation of international leaders. The Mahoney scholarship enables Aggies to pursue an internship abroad and gain invaluable professional experience. Prospective participants to the program apply for the scholarship and are considered on a need-based basis.

Many students at Texas A&M have never had the chance to travel or work abroad. The Mahoneys not only fund these opportunities, but they meet with students before and after their trips, giving participants a chance to showcase their international experience and growth. At the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute, we believe that it is not enough to travel and work in another country: participants must be able to reflect and articulate on what they have learned, and the Mahoneys provide them this opportunity to do so. The meetings also provide scholarship recipients an opportunity to thank the Mahoneys for their generosity.

The Mahoneys also support the MSC as a whole. This year, they hosted student leaders at their home as a safe space to practice fundraising skills with former Aggies. The gathering was highly valuable to all attendees, many of whom had no prior development experience. They also funded a Houston luncheon to help students



win support for their programs. A few students, myself included, were able to present to the entire audience of Former Students - an excellent opportunity to pitch their organizations' financial needs.

From our committee to the entire MSC, the Mahoneys continually find ways to give back to the next generation of Aggies. They believe in every student's potential, and embody the Aggie core value of selfless service by helping them fulfill it. In the future, Aggies across the world will continue to be able to do what Aggies do - solve problems and improve life. This would not be possible without Former Students like the Mahoneys.

"The Mahoney Scholarship was able to guide me in the right direction as I pursued cultural exploration in a place I had never even dreamed of going. The Mahoneys' persistence and passion for student success has been my catalyst for working globally in the new era of international commerce." - Miles Bentley, College of Liberal Arts

AVA KOWALSKI'S ISP EXPERIENCE

By: Javier Santana '19

This past summer, Ava Kowalski traveled to San Isidro, Costa Rica to serve a community by leading exercise classes and teaching about health. Though that was her original plan, she also helped in developing a community center, taught English classes and led health discussions at the local high school.

Ava was born in Waco, Texas, and came to Texas A&M to study Kinesiology aiming to become a physical therapist. She is pursuing minors in Spanish and Psychology because she believes that, as a healthcare provider, it is important to be able to relate to and understand patients from different backgrounds. Prior to her trip to Costa Rica, she had never left the country and was eager to see the world beyond where she lives.

She also wanted to improve her Spanish.

Initially an outsider to the community, she broke out of her shell and developed meaningful relationships. One of her most impactful outcomes was learning how to relate to people from another culture: *"We are all human, we all have basic needs. No matter how different our cultures are, we are human at the end of the day."*

Ava has 3 more semesters at Texas A&M, and after graduation she plans to go to physical therapy school and work internationally. While in Costa Rica, she became inspired to support cancer survivors by encouraging them to explore nature and learning to enjoy life through their struggle. She wishes to heal others through this holistic approach to recovery.

A VISIT FROM AMY & ROBERT BACON

By: Joshua Johnson '23

While the history and purpose of the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute is no secret, sometimes a personal touch is needed to show the full scope of the organization. In February, we had the honor of hosting Mrs. Amy Bacon '91, a gift planning officer for the Texas A&M Development Foundation, and her husband, Mr. Roger Bacon '91, Site and Operations Manager at ExxonMobil's Baytown facility, to speak at a meeting about their experiences of traveling abroad and how they believe that Mrs. Jessie W. Jordan's vision pans out today.

Mr. and Mrs. Bacon's experience with international awareness began with Mrs. Bacon's role as Vice President of Development for the MSC. She served as one of Mrs. Jordan's official hostesses when she was on campus and was inspired by her international experiences. As a result, they did not hesitate when Mr. Bacon's job with ExxonMobil led him to Rotterdam in the Netherlands for two years. It was then that the Bacons understood why Mrs. Jordan pushed so strongly for international awareness. Mrs. Bacon was pushed out of her comfort zone and, therefore, learned much more than she could have by staying in the United States. Mr. Bacon reflected on the universal nature of company culture, showing the international connectedness of corporations and countries.

What the Bacons learned abroad is why they remain supporters of the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute. When the Bacons were in school, Texas A&M had few international programs. Today, the institute's International Service Program, Fellows Program, and Internship and Living Abroad programs offer international trips to all majors and are larger than some departmental study abroad programs.

At the end of their talk, the Bacons reinforced how great their time living abroad was and advised our members that if they wish to work abroad, they should "plant the seed" for it by letting their future employers know. Mrs. Bacon closed the talk by sharing how proud she knew Mrs. Jordan would be to see how the Institute has grown and the substantial impact that it has had on campus and the community around it.

JORDAN MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

By: Cole Heath '20

Matthew Nobbe '20 is a Senior Industrial Distribution Engineering Major from Klein, Texas who joined the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute in the Fall of 2019. Matthew joined L.T. Jordan because he wanted to add an international component to his education here at Texas A&M. He values the opportunity to work with an organization that brings international cultures to campus. As a member of the Support Subcommittee, Matthew has been able to experience some of the behind-the-scenes work that makes many of MSC L.T. Jordan's programs possible. His favorite L.T. Jordan experience was hearing Dr. Valerie Hudson speak to MSC L.T. Jordan, as well as other MSC committees and organizations, on her research into the importance of security for women and its effect on the security of nations. Starting in January, Matthew assumed the role of interim Graphic Design Executive, and is now applying his marketing and design skills to MSC L.T. Jordan programs.



Zainab Sunny '22 is a Sophomore International Studies Major from North Zulch, TX. Zainab joined MSC L.T. Jordan because she wanted an opportunity to develop her leadership skills as well as her professional network. She also wanted to gain knowledge and experience by being surrounded by a community filled with international exposure. As Matthew did, Zainab particularly enjoyed Dr. Valerie Hudson's presentation, especially how it related to the theme of SEVEN, a documentary play that MSC L.T. Jordan helped bring to campus. Zainab says that her time in L.T. Jordan has made her a more responsible individual and a more confident public speaker. She is excited to be returning to further develop L.T. Jordan's programs and to continue growing the friendships that she has made.



BUILDING GLOBAL LEADERS THROUGH IEO

By: *Cullen Miller '22*

This year, I have had the privilege of being the International Education Outreach Executive for the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness. IEO is a program in which we reach out to teachers at local middle and high schools and deliver presentations to students about a specific country. Last year, I helped with various presentations, and sharing my passion for all things international with the students was truly inspiring. I enjoyed this so much that I became the IEO executive for this year, and so far I have had the opportunity to work with members to speak to students about Bolivia and Brazil. These IEO presentations have enabled me to grow as a leader and have motivated me to spread international awareness to those around me.

One of the most important and useful skills that I have learned as an IEO executive is communication. Communication with teachers and members, coordinating

dates to meet and present, and organizing the research and presentations were all challenging at first. After lots of practice, however, I learned and improved, which enabled me to more effectively expose both students and members to information about other countries.

The work that I have done as the IEO executive has shown me the importance of teaching others about the world. During our presentations, many students asked questions and seemed genuinely interested in the country we were discussing. I realized that if each one of these kids shared their fascination with the world with others around them, then the ripple effect could have an impact on a huge number of people. The kids that we are presenting to are the next generation — our world needs internationally aware leaders to create dialogue between countries and work for peace.



TEXAS RUSSIAN, EAST EUROPEAN, AND EURASIAN STUDIES (TREEES)

By: *Diego Contreras '21*

On Saturday, September 28th, 2019, the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute sponsored, in conjunction with the International Studies Russian Language Program, the Texas Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (TREEES) society as they conducted their academic conference, Russian and Eurasian Studies in Texas Today.

Throughout the day, TREEES conducted panels full of subject matter experts. Panelists ranged in background from Russian astronaut teachers to Bulgarian meat researchers. Dr. James Olson and Alexander Genis served as keynote speakers. Dr. Olson has over 30 years of overseas covert experience with the CIA. Alexander Genis has authored over 12 non-fiction best sellers in Russia.

Dr. Olga Cooke is to thank for this wonderful program. Dr. Cooke is an associate professor of Russian at Texas A&M and holds degrees in Russian, Slavic, and East European studies. Her network of experts has allowed her to coordinate this conference over the years, though this was the first time that the conference has been open to the public.

Students from all over campus came to engage with visiting academics. This program's success speaks to the curiosity that Aggies hold for learning about international cultures and taking part in enriching intellectual discussions. Ultimately, keynote speakers, panelists, and conference attendees all had a worthwhile cultural experience full of meaningful insight, constructive dialogue, and personal reflection.

SEVEN & DR. HUDSON'S PRESENTATION

By: Zainab Sunny '22

On October 16th, 2019, Dr. Valerie Hudson gave an abridged presentation of her upcoming book: *The First Political Order: How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide* to the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness, the International Student Association, and MSC OPAS in preparation for SEVEN, a documentary play about seven women around the world, fighting for the welfare of women, families, and children. According to Dr. Hudson, the first political order takes place in any society within the relationships between women and men. Dr. Hudson explained how this first political order between the two genders affects societies as a whole, leading to her thesis that how women are treated at home is both a reflection of and a factor in the stability of that society.

Dr. Hudson shared some insight about the nature of this first political order, indicating that the analysis is not based on female literacy, labor force participation, or parliamentary representation. It is based on the degree of disempowerment women feel at the household level, making it more of a cultural problem rather than an educational or work-related one. These cultural practices strangle societies from the bottom-up, creating instability, violence, terror, corruption, autocracy, low economic performance, and more. In short, not only does this behavior affect a woman's home but also her nation as a whole.

"SEVEN tells the stories of seven women from Russia, Cambodia, Guatemala, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Northern Ireland who fearlessly struggled for the rights of women and minorities around the globe." In her talk, Dr. Hudson noted that when actions are taken to overcome the hold of unfair laws, practices, and traditions, improvement ensues. As SEVEN plays out, it presents many of the retrograde customs that Dr. Hudson spoke about through the narratives of seven women. The play powerfully demonstrates how these brave women stood up against repressive systems to bring about major change for the downtrodden in their communities and nations. It highlights the links between all of their stories, showing us that courage for the right cause makes the world a better place, regardless of where we are and what obstacles we face.



We asked the audience how this play helped them think about their experiences at Texas A&M. The following are some of their responses:

"It made me recognize just how good I have it. You never know what people have gone through."

"This show was a powerful opportunity to learn about the experiences of women around the world."

"It helped me realize I do have an important voice."





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On behalf of the L.T. Jordan Institute, the Jordan Journeys staff would like to thank you for your contributions. We are looking forward to another successful year! Thanks & Gig 'Em!

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

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Laura Roots '22 - ISP Executive
Joshua Johnson '23 - Member
Cole Heath '20 - Student Development Executive
Cullen Miller '22 - IEO Executive
Diego Contreras '21 - On-Campus Programming Executive
Zainab Sunny '22 - Member

A NOTE ON COVID-19:

Given the unprecedented circumstances surrounding the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, all of our international travel and on-campus programs after March 2020 have been cancelled or reformatted to a virtual mode as is appropriate until further notice. Nevertheless, we continue to develop globally minded student leaders and promote international awareness on campus. Please follow us on our social media for updates.

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Please make your check payable to Texas A&M Foundation and indicate below how you would like your contribution to support the L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness.

_____ **MSC L.T. Jordan Institute Annual Programs** (05-53059) — Support the Jordan Institute's on-campus and abroad programs such as International Educational Outreach, Internships and Living Abroad Programs (ILAP), and Jordan Fellows. *To give by credit card, go to give.am/SupportJordanInstitute.*

_____ **MSC L.T. Jordan International Awareness Endowment** (04-53059) — Help build the endowment to support the Jordan Institute's mission of providing Texas A&M and the community with international exposure through on-campus programming and travel abroad opportunities.

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