

THE LAFF SOCIETY

For the men and women engaged in Life After the Ford Foundation

FALL 2005

NO. 42

ACLU Head to Speak

The third in a new series of talks by outstanding alumni will be given Wednesday, September 28. The speaker will be **Anthony D. Romero**, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union. Romero was director of the Human Rights and International Cooperation Program during his five years of service at the Ford Foundation.. (See *biography p. 2*).

The alumni speakers program is designed to strengthen bonds among former Ford staff on a substantive basis," stated **Peter F. Geithner**, president of the LAFF Society.

"These events will deal with vital issues with which former staff members dealt and are still central on the national and international agendas."

The first seminar was with **Gordon Conway**, former representative in the Foundation's New Delhi office, then president of the Rockefeller Foundation. The second, May 11 this year, at the Nathan Cummings Foundation headquarters, featured **David Arnold**, president of the American University of Cairo, who described the political and educational environment of the university, including plans to build a major new campus. He reviewed the long-standing connection between the AUC and the Foundation, going back to the opening of Ford's operations in the Middle East.

Although the series has begun with talks in New York, the hope is

Transnational Adoption



During the 1990s the number of children adopted from poorer countries to the more affluent West grew exponentially. Close to 140,000 transnational adoptions occurred in the United States alone. This aspect of globalization is explored in a new book, *Cultures of Transnational Adoption* (Duke University Press), edited by Ford alumnus **Toby Alice Volkman**, deputy provost at New School University. Volkman was a program officer for International and Area Studies for six years (1995-2000). She developed an

initiative called "Crossing Borders: Revitalizing Area Studies."

Before joining Ford, she was at the Social Science Research Council, involved in fostering scholarly relations between institutions in the U.S. and Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

In the book, research for which was supported by a Foundation grant to New York University, Volkman and seven other contributors explore the images and narratives related to transnational adoption, and the preoccupation with "roots" and "birth cultures." The cultural experiences considered in the book raise important questions about race and nation; about kinship, biology, and belonging; and about the politics of sending and receiving nations.

They describe a trip during which a group of Chilean adoptees and their Swedish parents travel "home" to Chile, the "culture camps" attended by thousands of young-adult Korean adoptee whom South Korea is now eager to reclaim as "overseas Koreans," and adopted children from China and their North American parents grappling with the question of what "Chinese" or "Chinese American" identity might mean. Essays on Korean birth mothers, Chinese parents who adopt children within China and the circulation of children in Brazilian families reveal the complexities surrounding adoption with the so-called sending countries.

The essays, says the *Library Journal*, "draw readers into communities little known to North American adoption workers and families and scarcely remarked upon in sociological and anthropological writing...[T]his volume is accessible to motivated general readers."

that alumni and other regions of the country will follow suit.

The event will take place between 5 to 7 p.m. at Marymount Manhattan

College, 221 East 71 St. Refreshments will be served. Please call or e-mail **Mary Camper-Titsingh** on whether or not you will attend. isaakbk1@aol.com.

The LAFF Society

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The LAFFing Parade

New members include **Joseph A. Aguerrebere Jr.**, who was the Foundation's deputy director, Knowledge Creativity and Freedom Program, from 1998-2003, providing oversight for grantmaking in education and scholarship, sexuality, and religion. Earlier he was a program officer, Education, Media, Arts, and Culture Program. A Ph.D. in educational administration and faculty member of the University of Southern California, Aguerrebere is currently president and chief executive officer of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, a multi-million dollar nonprofit dedicated to top advancing the quality of teaching and learning. 215 Noland St., Falls Church, VA 22046. (703)465-2700
jaguerrebere@nbpts.org.

The Board was headed for several years by Ford alumnus **James A. Kelly**.

Peter S. Cleaves, who served with the Foundation in Peru and Mexico from 1972 to 1982. 3605 Flamevine Cove, Austin, TX 78735. (512)328-9190.
pcleaves@drgconsultants.com.

Ken Wilson, 394 University Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94301.
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Anthony D. Romero

The sixth head of the American Civil Liberties Union, Anthony Romero is the first Latin and openly gay man to serve in that capacity its 82-year history.

Born in New York City to immigrant parents from Puerto Rico, he was the first in his family to graduate from high school. He was graduated from Stanford University's Law School and Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He was a Dinkelspiel Scholar at Stanford and a Cane Scholar at Princeton.

Before joining Ford, he worked at the Rockefeller Foundation, where he led a foundation review that helped to determine future directions in civil-rights advocacy. As the ACLU's official biography states, he led the Human Rights and International Cooperation Program "through a period of extraordinary growth, transforming it into Ford's largest and most dynamic grant-making unit." As director of the program, he channeled some \$90 million in grants and civil-rights, human rights and peace projects in 2000, and "launched groundbreaking initiatives in affirmative action, voting rights and redistricting, immigrants' rights, women's rights, reproductive freedom and lesbian/gay rights."

Romero took the helm of the ACLU a week before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. As the organization's account portrays the situation, "The air where the ACLU is headquartered was still thick with smoke when the [Bush]

administration began pressuring Congress to remove checks and balances on law-enforcement. It was not the first time that Americans were asked to trade away freedoms for increased security, and it would not be the last, but the ACLU stood its ground under Romero's leadership, steadfastly maintaining that it is possible to be both safe and free."

A lawyer with a history of public-interest activism, Romero presided over the most successful membership drive in the ACLU's history. In his first year, 75,000 individuals became card-carrying members of the organization.

Eritrea-Ethiopia Crisis

In an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post*, former Foundation program officer **Gehbre Selassie Mehreteab**, urges the United States to resume serious diplomatic efforts to prevent recurrence of war between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Mehreteab, an Eritrean-American, said war would ruin hopes for prosperity in the two countries. The United States brokered an agreement between the countries in 2000 after a two-year border dispute resulted in the deaths of 100,000 combatants and an untold number of civilian casualties. Thanks to American efforts the countries signed the Algiers peace agreement, which created a neutral boundary commission in the Hague with a mandate to determine the line between the countries. In April, 2002 the commission carried out its boundary-setting mission and ruled, among other things, that the town that was the flashpoint in the recent war was in Eritrea, not Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian prime minister called that decision "illegal, unjust, and irresponsible," and, writes Methreteab, Ethiopia has illegally occupied large expanses of territory that belong to

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Eritrea, displacing more than 45,000 Eritreans. The slightest miscalculation on either side, warns Mehreteab, could plunge the region into another bloodbath.

Mehreteab heads an affordable-housing organization in Washington.

Ethiopia, a country of 73 million has enjoyed a close relationship with the U.S. Eritrea, with 4.5 million people divided equally between Muslims and Christians, has been steadfast in opposing Islamic fundamentalism, especially that coming from Sudan. It has had a close relationship with the U.S. since its independence in 1991.

“Through its aid and other bilateral relationships, the U.S. is capable of changing Ethiopia’s assessment of its own interests,” Mehreteab says. “Should war come again, no amount of U.S. aid will make up for our failure to engage in effective diplomacy.”

Lawyering at the Ford Foundation

BY SHEILA McLEAN

My titles at the Foundation were “Associate General Counsel” and “Board Appointed Officer.” This bifurcated “handle” was **Mac Bundy**’s way of indicating that while I was a lawyer who lawyered there, I also did program work—first, in the early 1970s when I developed the first grants on women’s legal rights and later, in the mid 1070s to 1979. I worked half-time as a program officer on human rights and education in apartheid South Africa. My life after the Foundation has taken several turns since my tenure there, but the imprint of the FF on my professional career has been significant.

First, I believed then as I have throughout my career that the best lawyering is done by someone who really understands the business to

which the lawyering relates. Second, from those early days until now I remain fascinated by the structure of philanthropy and the nonprofit world. This piece is a small contribution to those who care about how much the world of law as it affects philanthropy since the 1970s.

I arrived at the Foundation on short-term leave of absence from Cravath, Swaine & Moore, to help the Foundation consider the impact on its existing and future portfolio of grants of the Tax Reforms Act of 1969. Almost simultaneous with my arrival, a team of Internal Revenue Service auditors also came “on site.” They were not there to examine the new law but instead, among other things, were marshalling arguments to challenge to legal basis for the Foundation’s operations outside the U.S.

Frankly, traditional legal research produced no clear argument for why it was permissible for foundations to make grants overseas. After extensive research and lots of speculative conversations with my “clients,” who included **David Bell**, the executive vice president of the Foundation, **Eugene (Rocky) Staples** (Asia), **Bill Carmichael** (Latin America) **Bob Edwards** (Middle East and Africa), and my colleague and senior, **Tom Wright**, we conjured up a possible legal argument, with little basis in documented “law” but lots in social anthropology. The argument was that all people, in all societies, express a charitable impulse and that in doing this, their activities were the equivalent of activities of U.S. charitable, educational organizations.

How could we prove this? Not through “bench research.” Dave Bell asked me if I went overseas would I be able to “find” the equivalents of 501(c) (3)s in other legal systems. My answer was a resounding yes, and so I visited Lebanon, (pre-war) and North Africa and other places and out of that

quest, we developed the “equivalency” doctrine, which to this day permits American private foundations to make grant overseas to non-U.S. institutions. Our effort on this and on other seemingly technical matters (allowing foreign equivalents to make sub-grants to organizations and individuals) were often inventive and sometimes courageous.

At the time, other foundations wouldn’t join us in arguing with Congress or the IRS. We got results for the sector—but we were lone rangers.

Synergos

Since leaving the Ford Foundation in 1992, **David Winder** has been involved with the Synergos Institute, a nonprofit organization that works to reduce poverty in the developing world. It brings philanthropic families together to deepen the impact of their social investments. The organization has a staff of over 35 and an annual budget of \$5 million. One of Winder’s activities was a program to provide technical support to new and existing grantmaking foundations and associations of foundation in Latin American, South East Asia, and Southern Africa. He also created a Senior Fellow program for staff of foundations, associations, and support organizations.

He has drawn on the help of many former Ford colleagues. In one program, the Border Philanthropy Initiative, 20 community foundations and nine donor organizations joined to improve life on the Mexico border. He was a program officer in Mexico, 1980-82, representative for Mexico and Central America, 1982-96, and representative for Southeast Asia, 1987-1992.

Currently he is developing a program to create multi-stakeholder partnerships to tackle major global and national economic and social

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challenges. In partnership with Generon Consulting in Boston, Synergos is designing an effort to address the problems of child malnutrition in India.

New Directory Data

A new edition of the LAFF Society Directory is in the works. It updates the edition published in 2003. We hope to include more information in the next edition, so in addition to mail and e-mail addresses please mention office or division in which you served at the Foundation and years of service. Please send changes to Dorothy Nixon, dnixon@comcast.net

In Memoriam-

MARY EVANGELIDES, July 2. She worked as a payroll clerk/payroll assistant in the Comptroller's office from 1965 until her retirement on June 28, 1974.

THE LAFF SOCIETY

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A LAFF Society Clone

A San Francisco area equivalent of The LAFF Society is in formation, Doris Bebb, who worked at the Ford Foundation from 1954 to 1958, reports. She and other employees of the Asia Foundation, to which she went when she left Ford have formed an Asia Foundation Alumni Association. 175 people indicated an interest, and a reunion was held in August, marking the 50th anniversary of the Asia Foundation.

The purpose of the organization, she writes, "would be entirely social—to keep in touch, reminisce a bit, and occasionally have gatherings to share past experiences and present activities. It would have no connection with the Asia Foundation (the Foundation did help put together a mailing list)—no projects, no fund raising, and, initially, no dues." 1661 Pine St., Apt 525. San Francisco, CA 94109.

Pen (or PC) In Hand

As always, we need members to send us their news, reflections, reminiscences or whatever else they think will interest their former colleagues. We try to publish three times a year, and depending on the volume of contributions we are sometimes pressed to meet that schedule. So please keep your pieces coming. Correspondence should be addressed to our Secretary, Mary Camper-Titsingh, 531 Main St., Apt. 1110, New York, N.Y. 10044.

Reprive

In the last issue it was stated that LAFF Society members who have not paid dues for the last five years or more would be removed from the mailing list.

For the time being we are retaining those delinquents while we re-examine the policy. The problem is serious. 182 persons have been deleted from the list, nearly one-fourth of the entire membership. At the same time 24 new people have joined.

Ford Foundation Archive - LAFF File
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