

BPIA BULLETIN

The Newsletter of the Association of Black Professionals in International Affairs

About the Association

BPIA is a charitable, non-profit membership association founded in 1989 to increase the involvement of African Americans and other people of African heritage in international affairs.

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What's Inside

In this seasonal transition issue we look back at what BPIA was up to during its busy spring into summer, and forward to fall. Back in March, there was a cross-communication workshop at the State Department, page 4. Our participation in April — with a diverse group of young professionals of color — in the annual Conference on Diversity at the Council on Foreign Relations introduced us to an engaging black Moldovan, page 6. The next step event in our mentoring program, the BPIA Mentor/Mentee Matching Workshop in May, is reported on page 3, and an excellent “Think & Drink: Uncertainty and Its Consequences” event in early June, on page 2.

In June we also met black counterterrorism expert Malcolm Nance at a book signing, page 4, and in August noted with sadness the passing of longtime, staunch BPIA supporter Ambassador Princeton Lyman, page 2. We offer our first *BPIA Bulletin* editorial on page 5, and “On the Calendar” can be found on the inside back cover, page 7.

BPIA Bulletin is a quarterly publication. Persons interested in contributing/subscribing to the newsletter should email the Editor, Dr. Michele Cisco Titi, at upwardway17@gmail.com.



BPIA's First "Think + Drink" — It Worked!

"It was very good; it caused me to think," said Carlene Dei, in attendance at the association's inaugural "Think + Drink" event, held June 5 at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. Billed as "an evening of engaging conversation and libations," the program featured a panel discussion of "Uncertainty and Its Consequences."

BPIA Vice President for Business and Economic Development John Calvin Williams moderated the panel of three. The presenters were Dr. Marcus Casey, David M. Rubinstein Fellow in Economic Studies, Brookings Institution, and Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Illinois at Chicago; Charlotte Kea, Deputy Director, Office of Gifts and Grants, US Peace Corps, and immediate past president, International Career Advancement Program Alumni Association; and Ehsan Zaffar, Senior Advisor (on civil rights and civil liberties), Department of Homeland Security.



l-r: Williams, Casey, Key, Zaffar



The panelists focused on an array of provocative factors contributing to the current atmosphere of uncertainty in societies around the world, including rising populism, a fragmented social media landscape, access to clean water, and the future of work in the face of increasing automation. They discussed the importance of education in a time of "alternative facts," immigration and changing national demographics, and issues of class and economics. Importantly, although the panelists recognized the pessimism and disruption that can come with uncertainty, some also pointed to the "opportunity side" of the equation

that new needs can create. There was agreement that people can also identify shared realities and values to use as starting points for dialogue. *[Pictured above, left: "Think+Drink" participants]*

Farewell to a Friend

On August 24, the Honorable Princeton Lyman, passed away at age 82. During an international career of more than 50 years, Dr. Lyman served his country as US Ambassador to Nigeria, and US Ambassador to South Africa during the election of Nelson Mandela. He was a US envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, helping to implement the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. At the US Institute of Peace, he was the Senior Advisor to the President, and at the Council on Foreign Relations, the Ralph Bunche Fellow for African Affairs. In addition to these and many more illustrious endeavors, Ambassador Lyman was also a friend and supporter of BPIA. We mourn his loss, and express our condolences to his family.

Mentor Matchmaking at Workshop

by Earl Yates and Sandile Hlatshwayo

Early in 2018, BPIA saw excellent participation and promising results as outcomes of its Professional Development/Mentoring Workshop, held at the United Negro College Fund's College Knowledge Center January 27, and its Professional Development and Mentoring Soirée: "Moving Forward and Giving Back," at The Washington Center on February 22. Building on the achievement and promise of those events, BPIA held a Mentor/Mentee Matching Workshop on May 12.

Held at the US African Development Foundation with the organization's full programmatic and logistical support, the workshop gave paired Mentors and Mentees an opportunity to meet in person. Over coffee and pastries they got to know each other personally and professionally, sharing their respective professional backgrounds. The Mentees articulated their professional development aspirations and goals, noted foreseen opportunities and obstacles, and stated personal preferences and priorities that might affect all of these dynamics. In subsequent discussions, they brainstormed with Mentors on career strategy options and action planning for both the near and longer terms.

The workshop's 15 Mentors had extensive professional backgrounds and records of achievement, with past and/or present employment by, or affiliation with the Department of State, US Agency for International Development, US Peace Corps, International Monetary Fund, African Development Foundation, Association of Black American Ambassadors, Black Professionals in International Affairs, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, among others.



The 17 Mentees were currently affiliated with the International Trade Commission, World Learning, USAID, the Small Business Administration, the World Bank, and various graduate programs around the Washington, DC area.

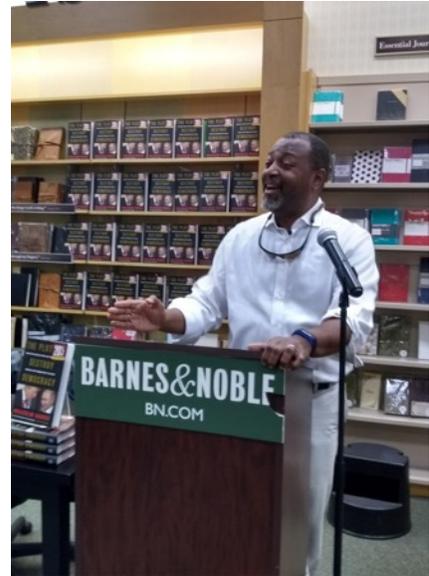
Mentors and Mentees committed to establishing and maintaining ongoing contacts to afford them the opportunity to refine strategies and action plans as needed. These contacts will also serve to guide the Mentees in expanding their

networks, and to facilitate their staying informed by alerting them to timely and suitable career development opportunities as they arise or are trending. *[Pictured above: Mentor/Mentee Matching Workshop participants]*

Latest Nance Book — Scary!

Cable TV news viewers will recognize the familiar face of Malcolm Nance (right), an expert in counter-terrorism, intelligence, and related fields. It was summer when we met Nance at the Tyson's Corner Barnes and Noble, but he was serving up something as frightening as Halloween — his latest book, *The Plot to Destroy Democracy: How Putin and His Spies are Undermining America and Dismantling the West*. He was relaxed and congenial, even a bit jovial, despite his sobering subject matter.

“My own book scares me,” the author quipped. The book is described as the story of how Russian President Vladimir Putin and his spy agencies used “blackmail, espionage, assassination and psychological warfare” not only “to steal the US election,” but also to seek “to bring about the fall of NATO, the European Union and Western democracy...”



Nance identifies Russia's inability to overpower the US economically — he described Putin's country to the audience as “a trailer park with 5,000 atomic bombs and oligarchs with money frozen by the US” — as the motivator for taking the conflict to “the information battle space.” There, he said, it used the technologies and freedoms of Western democracies to threaten their governance structures, starting what the author described to his audience as “Web War I.” The book describes ways Russia used cultural elements, including anti-gay and anti-Muslim sentiments shared by conservative Russians and “ethno-nationalist” counterparts among US and European populations to seek a new political order. In the US, hatred of the nation's first black president was also part of their toolkit. It's a story told in fine detail.

A Philadelphia native, Nance is a former US Navy senior chief petty officer who specialized in cryptology, with more than 30 years of experience in intelligence. The Arabic speaker wrote *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe* (2016) and several other books on Middle East terror groups. He also penned *The Plot to Hack America* in 2016. Offering perhaps the evening's most surprising bit of biodata, he described himself as “a lifelong Republican.”

In the Q&A, your mildly alarmed *BPIA Bulletin* editor asked, “Malcolm, what do you want us to *do* about all this?” In response, he told us to vote in November, and get everyone else we know to do the same.

Communication Workshop at State

Last spring, a group of college students and young international affairs professionals participated in a cross-cultural communication training workshop at the US State Department. The program, held March 26, was co-sponsored by BPIA with Ms. Black DC US Ambassador, Candace Johnson. State Department presenters were BJ McDuffie, Evaluation and Program Manager, TechCamp Program; and Foreign Service Officer Shari Bistransky. (Continued on p. 7)

Our First Editorial — Voting is Not Enough!

To work optimally, democracies require an informed and engaged citizenry. Let's face it: America hasn't had that in a long time — if ever. If you don't believe it, tune in to C-SPAN any weekday morning and listen to the listener/viewer call-ins, or check out the results of this Council of Foreign Relations/National Geographic Survey on Global Literacy at <https://www.cfr.org/global-literacy-survey> (average score: 55%).

And it's against this backdrop that our country faces the most important mid-term elections of our times. Are you pleased with the current direction of US relations with Russia, Canada, the European Union? With US withdrawal from international agreements like the Paris Agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the JCPOA (Iran Nuclear Deal)? Do you like current US immigration policy? Imposition of tariffs? Or for that matter, the general direction of domestic policy? Yes? OK, but if your answer is No, what are you *doing* about your displeasure?

Clearly, we can't resolve problems of a largely disengaged and poorly informed electorate before November 6 — that's long-term work — but there are important things that each of us who are civically engaged can do right now to work for positive change in government.

Voting is of course the number one imperative. Schwerner, Goodman, Cheney, Ms. Liuzzo and others gave their lives so that black Americans, in particular, could vote. Ms. Hamer took a jailhouse beat-down for her voter registration efforts. In their memory, black folks should show up at the polls every Election Day.

You must register/verify that your registration is current. Be sure that you have the required voter ID documents. Verify the location of your polling place in advance. Then make the time to educate yourself about the candidates and the issues — local, state, national — and vote early, if possible, or on November 6. Further, *do your utmost to see that your family members, friends and associates in your community and around the country do the same.*

But there's more. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary civic engagement. As long as money is still the “mother's milk of politics,” wealthy donors and corporate entities will supply it to campaigns by the tanker-load, so couldn't you provide a worthy candidate a quart or a gallon? If you can't spare money to donate, then offer some time to a campaign. Canvass voters door-to-door; phone bank (you can do it at home on your computer); personalize post cards to voters; work the polls or transport voters on Election Day. There's so much “we, the people” can do this election season. Just *do something*.

NOTE: The views expressed in this article belong to the BPIA Bulletin Editor, and not necessarily to the organization or members of its Board.

Attention BPIA Members: Are your annual membership dues current? It takes funding to do what we do, and we want to do more! Full-time Student: \$20 General Member: \$50
Sustaining Member: \$195 Institutions: \$2,500

Mail payment to: BPIA/PO Box 55922/Washington, DC 20011

You're From Where?

We met a number of interesting people, including MSNBC newsman Ayman Moybeldin and former Homeland Security secretary Jeh Johnson, both presenters, last April at the 2018 Conference on Diversity in International Affairs. Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, it was held at the organization's Washington offices. We also encountered participant Fatima Djalo (right), a singer, media professional, and activist for the rights of people of African descent in Europe. She's currently a Program Coordinator at the Smith Center for Healing and the Arts in Washington. This October 9, she became a US citizen.



Bulletin: *When we met, I was surprised to learn that you are from Moldova. Were you born there? Is your husband Moldovan?*

Djalo: I was born in 1989 in Chisinau, the capital. My dad, who is from Guinea-Bissau, was sponsored by the Soviet Union to study and placed in Moldova. He met my mom there, and they got married. They had me and my two siblings, a sister and a brother. I lived in Moldova from birth until I was 24, with two separate stays in Guinea-Bissau for a total of two and a half years. My husband is American. We met at a human rights conference in Vienna in 2011.

Bulletin: *Is there such a thing as a black community in Moldova? If so, how would you describe it?*

Djalo: Yes, there is. It's really small. There are some African students, but mixed race people are the core of the community.

Bulletin: *To what degree can a black person feel accepted living in Moldova? What was your experience?*

Djalo: It has changed for the better over the years. Moldovans in general are hospitable, but in the Soviet era, they couldn't travel, so they were unexposed to other cultures. As a child growing up it was tough, because I was so different. Except for my sister, I was one of just two mixed-race black girls in a town of 25,000. People who knew me were used to me. Some were friends who saw me beyond race. People who didn't know me stared and commented. FATIMA (name unrelated), the Society for Protection of Children of African Descent in Moldova, is the only organization that helps people of African descent to integrate. It preserves African culture. (She worked there.) Its main goal is to help kids live a full, integrated life in society.

Bulletin: *Tell us about your educational and professional background.*

Djalo: I came to the US as an exchange student when I was a senior in high school. I went to college in Moldova. I studied political science at the State University of Moldova, one of the country's most prestigious institutions. In my last year of college, a friend urged me to audition for a reality talent show. It was kind of like Big Brother, but the contestants were all singers learning and practicing their vocal skills. I was one of 18 selected for the show, and survived to be one of six finalists. After this, I got an offer from the producer, and I became the first black Moldovan to host a TV show (at age 21!). After that, I worked in the Moldovan government at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the US, I went to Howard University for graduate school. I completed a master's degree in political science. (Continued on p. 7)

On the Calendar

Thursday, October 18, BPIA International Career Expo - 6:00-9:00 pm - Panel, exhibitors, networking, **Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center, Howard University, 2218 - 6th St., NW, Washington, DC 20059** Info contact: bpiaoutreach@iabpia.org

Wednesday, October 31, The Bridge Initiative: American Hate: Survivors Speak Out, Book Talk with Arjun Sethi, 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm, **Arrupe Hall, Georgetown University, 3700 O St., NW, Washington, DC 20057**

Thursday, November 8, Book Talk: Inside Al-Shabab: The Secret History of Al-Qaeda's Most Powerful Ally, with authors Harun Maruf and Dan Joseph - 9:45 - 11:15 am, **George Washington University, Lindner Family Commons, Room 602, Elliott School of International Affairs, 1957 E St., NW, Washington, DC 20052** Info contact: iafs@gwu.edu; 202.994.8483

Monday, November 12, BPIA Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Economic Outlook Forum, 6:00 - 9:00 pm, **The Washington Center, 1333 - 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036** Contact info: bpiaoutreach@iabpia.org

Thursday, November 15, Humanity in War: An International Humanitarian Law Primer for Professionals, a free training, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, **American Red Cross Historic Building, 430 - 17th St., NW, LL20, Washington, DC 20006**

cultures. "Find the person behind (e.g.) the title," she urged. Earl Yates, BPIA VP for Professional Development, told participants that in cross-cultural communication, "You yourself are the connection" with others, through "what you say and do compared with "how you made them feel." [Pictured above, from left: Candace Johnson, Bf McDuffie, Shari Bistransky]

Bulletin: *What, if anything, do you wish Americans knew more about with respect to Moldova and Eastern Europe?*

Djalo: First, about Moldova, that it's not the Maldives! It's not by the water. Second, it's really worth visiting, because they'll get a different perspective about Europe. Europe is so much more than the developed countries of the West. Rural aspects, heritage and traditional life are still preserved. You can still see carriages with horses. There is a rich culture, with Russian and Romanian influences. Also, the food is good. The wine is great! Moldova is like an Eastern European jewel that you must experience.

Bulletin: *Your skills and interests are wide-ranging. At 29, what are your career aspirations now?*

Djalo: I want to combine my artistic self, my caring self into something that I do best, communicating with people. I just want to be able to merge my entire experience into a platform where I can share human stories and help people be inspired about life, and overcome big issues like health challenges. I want to be a spokesperson for something that I truly believe in.

(Communication Workshop, continued from p. 4)

Both women stressed the importance of cultural preparation before overseas travel. "With the web, you can do your homework before you go," Bistransky said. McDuffie told the group to "do research on communication and social norms" pre-departure. She also observed that sometimes "People stare at people of color" abroad. "Come to terms with it," she advised. "Figure out what to do when, for example, people touch your skin, or your hair."

Bistransky emphasized the significance of making personal connections across



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