

The Roosevelt

The Newsletter of the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies

DECEMBER 2020

Moving Forward



A LETTER FROM THE BOARD



It has been an extraordinary year for RIAS and of course many others in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the program of the institute in a profound way. The Board would like to thank the directors and staff of the institute for the very effective way they managed to continue their work from home and online.

During the pandemic the institute moved to a new location in Middelburg. The new hosts, the Zeeuws Archief, has made us feel at home instantly. The work of the institute would not have been possible without the continuing (financial) support of the Province of Zeeland, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Leiden University, and the Zeeland Library, for which the RIAS is extremely grateful.

The institute has proven to be a resilient place at which excellent research continued and online activities reached scholars and the general public alike. So we can look forward to a new exciting year with confidence.

Wim van den Doel, Gerard van Harten, and Arendo Joustra

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTORS



The year 2020 will undoubtedly go down in history as one of the most challenging in our lifetimes. The crisis brought about by the corona virus led to shutdowns; travel restrictions; a new digital culture of working and meeting from home; and mass cancellations of events, classes, and public activities. The RIAS was particularly affected by these disruptions, but also had to contend with the added challenges of moving to a new location and—as Americanists—trying to make sense of a tumultuous election season overseas during which the very future of American democracy was at stake.

We are happy to report, however, that the RIAS not only survived this exceptional year but indeed continued to solidify its reputation as a preeminent research institution for American studies and transatlantic relations. We relocated our offices and library to a beautiful new location; organized and hosted online PhD seminars, an online conference, and online public lectures; recorded a vodcast series on the US elections; and intensified our cooperation with our local partners in Zeeland.

Our offices and library may not have been as busy and *gezellig* as they normally are, but we are proud of the progress we have made and we look forward to a promising year to come.

Damian Pargas and Giles Scott-Smith

THE RIAS AT A GLANCE



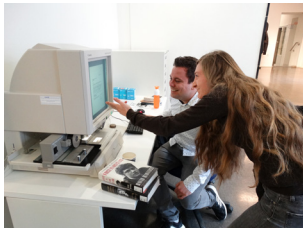
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A new location but the same engaging atmosphere.



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Reaching out to the public, both in person and online.



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EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Moving to the Zeeuws Archief

Since its initial founding as the Roosevelt Studies Center in 1986, the RIAS was located in the beautiful Abbey in the historic center of Middelburg. In the summer of 2020, we moved our offices and library to the Zeeuws Archief down the road.

The move represents a new phase in the institute's history, one which we hope will continue to be marked by ever-closer cooperation with our partner organizations throughout the city, including our new hosts and fellow historians at the Zeeuws Archief.

Indeed, the RIAS team is particularly enthusiastic at this prospect, since our new neighbors at the Zeeuws Archief share our deep interest in archival collections, cultural heritage, and important transatlantic themes such as the slave trade and migration.

In order to facilitate the move the RIAS was closed during the months of August and September 2020.



On 2 October 2020, we celebrated our reopening with a festive symposium, to which a select group of representatives from our local partners at the Province, Zeeuws Archief, UCR, and Roosevelt Foundation, among others, were invited.

The event was livestreamed for the wider public. Speeches and words of welcome were provided by provincial cabinet member Harry van der Maas, the director of the Zeeuws Archief Hannie Kool-Blokland, and RIAS director Damian Pargas.

The symposium featured a lecture by former colleague Hans Krabbendam, who presented his new book *Saving the Overlooked Continent: American Protestant Missions in Western Europe 1940-1975*.

The first copy of the book was presented to the director of the Zeeuws Archief, Hannie Kool-Blokland.

We very much look forward to welcoming students and researchers at our new home base in the years to come!



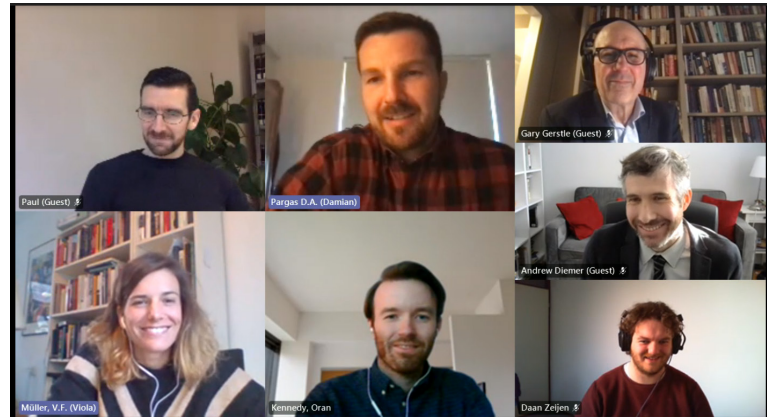
Racial Democracy Conference

On 10 and 11 December 2020, the RIAS hosted an online conference titled "Racial Democracy: Challenges to Civic Democratic Ideals in American History." The conference was co-sponsored by Leiden University and the NWO VIDI Project "Beacons of Freedom," led by Damian Pargas.

The conference explored both local and national cases throughout US history in which civic democratic ideals were challenged by racial interpretations of democracy and attempts to create or defend what might be referred to as "racial democracy."

Renowned historian Gary Gerstle (University of Cambridge) opened with a fascinating keynote talk on his theory of American "spaces of exception," underscoring three types of legal spaces that were created in order to prevent (certain) constitutional rights from applying to racial minorities. Subsequent presentations by Adam Fairclough, Maarten Zwiers, and Markha Valenta highlighted how practices of racial democracy were enacted, justified, enforced, and reinforced over time. Papers by Andrew Diemer, Viola Müller and Melissa Milewski showed how minorities have attempted to claim rights or even exert political pressure on the state, even without the right to vote.

Finally, a concluding keynote by Peter Rose (Stanford University/Smith College) provided a thorough overview of the development of racial democratic practices and institutions from the colonial period through the Trump presidency.



US Presidents' Dutch Roots

In 2020 the US Ambassador, Peter Hoekstra, made a series of videos to explore the Dutch roots of some of the US presidents. He came to the RIAS on 5 October 2020 to talk about the Roosevelts and their political legacies.

A discussion between the Ambassador and RIAS director Giles Scott-Smith was filmed in the library of the Zeeuws Archief, and they then went to the village of Oud-Vossemeer on the island of Tholen, to visit the Roosevelt Information Center located in the village's former council building.

The video, which is part of a series that also covers Martin van Buren and John Quincy Adams, is available on YouTube.



PUBLIC LECTURES

Radical Voices: Bob Brown

On Wednesday 4 March 2020 we welcomed long time social justice activist Bob Brown for a lecture. Over the past fifty years, Brown has participated in numerous movements dedicated to racial equality in the United States and throughout the African diaspora.

Besides being a member of the Chicago Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and director of the Midwest Office of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), he was also a founder of the Chicago Chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP). Brown is currently an organizer for the All-African People's Revolutionary Party (A-APRP).

Bob Brown has spoken and written a great deal about racial inequality and social justice since the Civil Rights era. In his lecture at the RIAS, he spoke about his latest work on the history of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans. Following his lecture, Debby Esmeé de Vlucht gave a short presentation on the influence of Black Power ideology on black protest in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean.

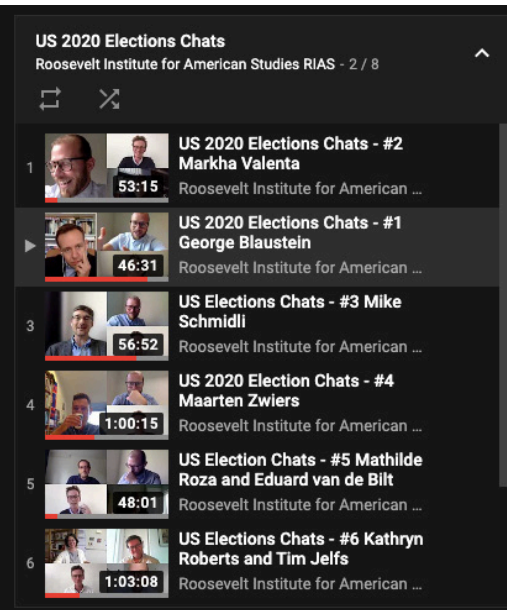
Brown's visit to Middelburg was co-hosted by University College Roosevelt, Stichting Slavernijmonumenten Zeeland, and the Zeeuws Archief.



The US Election Vodcasts

To coincide with the US Election, RIAS researchers Dario Fazzi and Cees Heere held a series of interviews with friends and colleagues from the Netherlands American Studies Association.

The videos, spanning an impressive variety of themes, are available at the RIAS YouTube channel.



Digital Roosevelt Lectures: Reflections on Post-Trump America



On Friday 30 October 2020 Liam Kennedy of the Clinton Institute for American Studies in Dublin delivered an online lecture entitled “Trump’s America.”

An expert on social, cultural, and media trends in the United States, Professor Kennedy provided an in-depth assessment of the world of Donald Trump and of those who support him.

Professor Kennedy spoke of the early hopes that President Trump could be “normalized,” and how these hopes were soon abandoned as the president attacked the institutions of government as much as immigrants and “the establishment” as a whole.

More than sixty people joined online for this lecture, and the Q&A session afterwards was understandably lively.



On Friday 18 December 2020 Gaetano Di Tommaso gave the final Roosevelt Lecture of the year. The setting was, once again, an online one, but the lecture was still well attended.

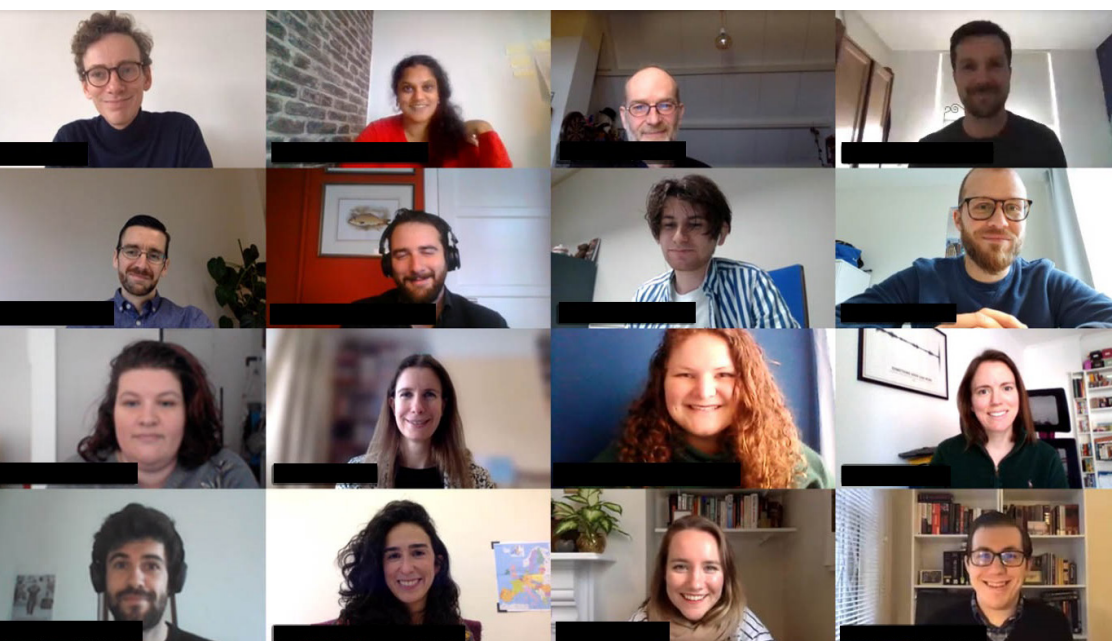
Dr. Di Tommaso, who earned his PhD from the University of Bologna and SciencesPo-Paris, is a historian of the US with an expertise on oil and energy policies. His talk revolved around the challenges, constraints and opportunities that Biden’s administration will encounter in the next four years while setting up its energy and climate policies

Besides the necessity to strike different compromises at home, due to a polarized political landscape and a Congress that remains largely dominated by the Republican Party, Dr. Di Tommaso highlighted the many struggles that will keep Biden’s administration busy abroad. Holding China accountable on many fronts, revamping multilateralism and transatlanticism are just a few of the steps that Biden’s team may take to place climate change at the center of its foreign policy agenda.

However, Dr. Di Tommaso emphasized that the road to net emissions and to the establishment of an environmentally sustainable energy policy is long and full of difficulties.

GRADUATE SCHOOL

The RIAS International Webinars



The biannual International PhD Seminar is always one of the high points of the RIAS year. It represents a unique opportunity for PhD students to share their projects with a community of peers and experienced professors and researchers and get spot-on, relevant and eye-opening feedback on their ongoing works.

From our side, these seminars allow us to take the pulse of American Studies all over the world and identify the most innovative, fruitful and engaging research trends that are characterizing our field of study.

Under normal circumstances, the RIAS staff host these groups of PhD students in Middelburg and make sure that the informal atmosphere of the institute facilitates scientific exchanges, debates and dialogues among all the participants.

In 2020, however, this was not possible, and we had to change the format of our seminars, moving them to an online environment. Though we missed meeting all the students in person, the academic quality of the seminars was maintained despite the format change.

We have hosted, both in July and in December 2020, two groups of top rank PhD students, whose theses explore and at times open up new and fascinating research threads.

We discussed projects dealing with national security issues, migration flows, workers' rights, environmental challenges, race relations, military strategies, civil liberties, presidential narratives, public memory, religious freedom, and US capitalism.

We have been impressed not only by the breadth and the variety of the topics, but also by the genuinely global outreach that our seminars have now achieved. We have had participants coming from universities in such different places as the United States, Morocco, France, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain.

We look forward to our 2021 seminars. Students who are interested in partaking will find our Calls for Papers both on our website and on our social media pages or can contact us via our new institutional email address, info@roosevelt.nl.

Student Visits and Internships

One of the RIAS's main missions is to make our sources available to students and researchers at any stage of their academic career. For this reason, the RIAS staff welcome every year groups of students coming from universities across the Netherlands and facilitates research internships that are meant to help students to finalize their theses and working papers.

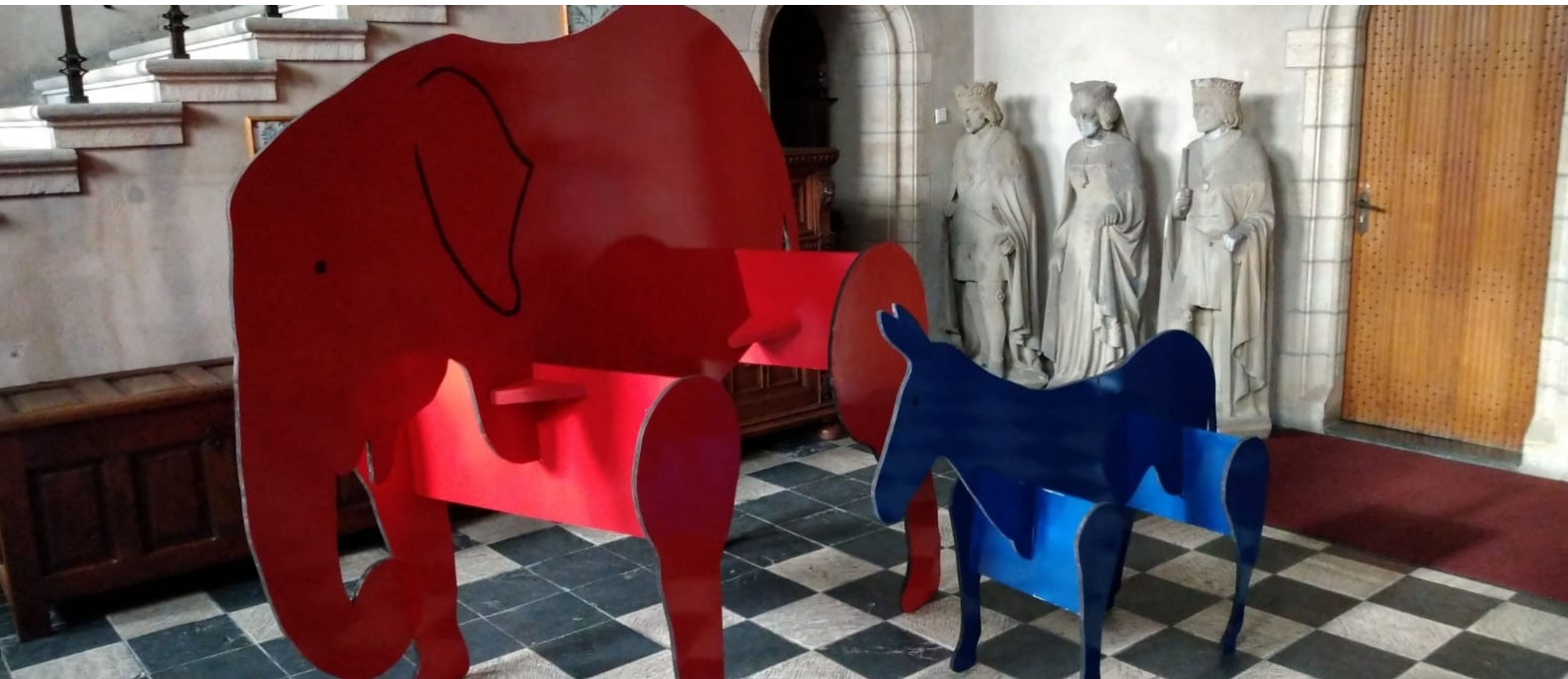
In 2020, we hosted students from Radboud University Nijmegen, Leiden University and the University College Roosevelt. We offered them a broad overview of our sources and collections, including our most recent acquisitions and our digital archives.

On several occasions, we organized short assignments through which the students could familiarize themselves with the contents of our holdings and have a glimpse of what it means to do historical research.

Just before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we managed to host a group of MA students from the Erasmus University Rotterdam, who made extensive use of our collections in order to write their theses, under the supervision of our research fellow Dario Fazzi.



Pursuing the Roosevelt Legacy in Zeeland



The 2020 Four Freedoms Awards were among the many events to be canceled this year. But in these unprecedented times, reclaiming the ideals that inspired FDR's famous 1941 address is perhaps more important than ever.

In that spirit, the RIAS joined with the Roosevelt Foundation and University College Roosevelt in developing an alternative Four Freedoms program for the benefit of local high school students. In a series of guest classes, students were asked to think through and discuss the meanings of freedom in the age of COVID-19.

The program culminated in a so-called "Modern United Nations," held digitally on 24 October 2020, in which students from across the province of Zeeland took on the roles of countries, NGOs, and even abstract concepts like "the oceans," to debate global issues.

Building on this ongoing collaboration, in 2021 the Roosevelt Foundation will publish a guide to teaching the Four Freedoms in schools, co-authored by RIAS postdoc Cees Heere, which will provide a series of lesson plans that translate the history and ideas of the Roosevelts into a range of classroom activities, from art projects to a "let's found the UN" debate simulation.

One event above all, however, loomed over the practice of American studies throughout the year: the 2020 election. Together with its local partners, the RIAS co-organized an election night to mark the occasion.

The event featured discussions on every conceivable aspect of the election, as well as student contributions and surprise appearances by the King's Commissioner in Zeeland and the Mayor of Middelburg.

Two of the RIAS's former Fulbright fellows, Justin Hart and Anne Foster, weighed in from Texas and Indiana respectively, to discuss the impact of the Trump presidency on the US's position in the world, while RIAS researcher Cees Heere regaled participants with an election-themed pub quiz.

A wooden elephant and a donkey, custom-made by students of the local high school, kept track of the results by "racing" across the market square.



Theodore Roosevelt American History Award

The RIAS annually awards the Theodore Roosevelt American History Award (TRAHA) to the best MA thesis written on a US-related topic at a Dutch university.

In 2020, the jury comprised Cees Heere (Chair, RIAS), Katy Hull (Erasmus University Rotterdam/ University of Amsterdam), Queeny van der Spek (2019 TRAHA winner), and Maarten Zwiers (University of Groningen).

As in previous years, the list of nominees testified to the diversity and intellectual reach of American studies as an academic field.

Many of the nominated theses, moreover, dealt with acutely relevant subjects, ranging from transatlantic diplomacy to the emergence of Artificial Intelligence, the history of the LGBT rights movement, and social and political dynamics of the US border with Mexico.

The jury unanimously agreed to award the TRAHA 2020 to Emma van Toorn, who graduated from Radboud University Nijmegen in 2019 with her thesis "Faith Floods the Desert: Religious Dynamics in the Southern Arizona Sanctuary Movements, 1980-2019."

A study of the Sanctuary movement set in its Arizonan locale, the thesis explores the ways in which religion manifested itself within the movement's rise to national prominence. It approaches this subject from an interdisciplinary and transnational angle, combining historical and anthropological methods.

All in all, the thesis shows us a fantastic example of how American studies research can be both historically grounded and socially relevant today, dealing with issues that are central to US society in the 2020s.



RESEARCH

A Hub for Research and Writing

With its unique collections of secondary and primary sources spanning across a huge variety of themes and periods, the RIAS maintains its role as one of the main centers for the study of US history, politics, society and culture in continental Europe.

Our ever-expanding holdings, including new digital databases and recently digitized collections, make the RIAS attractive to any researcher who is busy studying US-related topics. BA, MA and PhD students are, however, the main users of our sources and we are glad to facilitate their stays in and research trips to Middelburg in many ways.

One of the most successful research programs is the cooperation between the RIAS and the University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom. Over the years, students from Plymouth have joined us and made use of our collections in order to finalize their BA theses. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we had the pleasure to host Ashton Wright, who wanted to reconstruct the ways in which black women contributed to African American institutions, politics, social life and reform throughout the age of Jim Crow. Ashton consulted many relevant collections at the RIAS, including the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers.



Along with Ashton, we have been visited by Conor Ramsay, Joshua Greenhalgh, and Rhys Terry. Conor came to Middelburg to study why economic policies introduced in the New Deal eventually failed to improve the welfare of southern states.

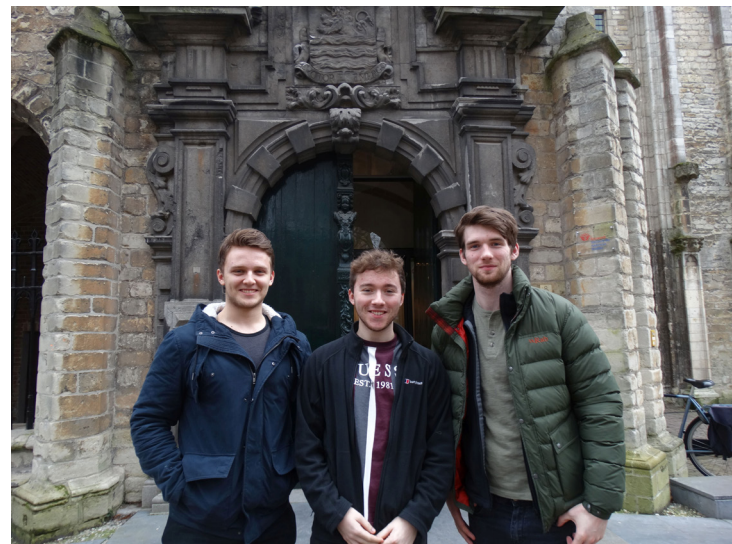
In his thesis, Joshua wanted to assess the role that polygamy had in the suffrage movement after the disenfranchisement of women in 1887. Rhys consulted the sources he needed to write his thesis titled "The Pursuit of the Disillusioned Voter: The Republican Party's Use of The Vietnam War and Racial Tension in the 1968 American Presidential Election."

Every year, a prize is given to the best American History thesis written by a Plymouth student, and in 2020 Ashton and Rhys shared this award for their outstanding scholarship.

Other students have benefitted from short stays in Middelburg, with the financial support of our travel grant program. Maxime Spithorst and Ian McTurk, both coming from the University of Southern Denmark, took advantage of their Erasmus exchange in the Netherlands, more specifically at the Radboud University Nijmegen, to spend one week of in-depth research at the RIAS and collect literature and primary sources that then they used to write their MA thesis back in Denmark.

Enrico Ciappi, a PhD Student from the University of Pavia, in Italy, spent an entire month collecting sources for his project on the relationship between the US-based Council on Foreign Relations and one of the European Community's founding fathers, Jean Monnet.

We welcomed more students and researchers throughout the year, from such different countries as the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Switzerland, and we hope to accommodate many more in our new location at the Zeeuws Archief.



The RIAS Short-Term Research Fellowship

During the start of the new year, from January until early March 2020, we welcomed Valeria Carbone from the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

As a short-term research fellow, Valeria conducted research on the transnational impact and relevance of Black Power and the African American struggle in Latin America, as well as the impact of the latter on the struggle of Black activists in the United States.

Valeria went through our microfilm collections, such as the Robert Williams Papers, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers documents, the "FBI File on the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), 1938-1975" and the "Records of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division," and she gathered documents and newspaper clippings through the RIAS online databases.

While in the Netherlands, Valeria advised two high school students from Nijmegen on the life and career of Martin Luther King, taught a class on "Peace and Race" at Leiden University, presented her project to the RIAS staff, and participated in and attended several conferences.

During her stay, Valeria even went as far as Valencia (Spain) to present her book titled *Una historia del movimiento negro estadounidense en la era post derechos civiles (1968-1988)* [A History of the Black Freedom Struggle in the post-civil rights era (1968-1988)].

In Argentina, Valeria teaches classes at the University of Buenos Aires and the School for International Training World Learning, and appears on Argentinian TV screens to talk about the Black Lives Matter movement and US politics in general.

In Valeria's own words, her visit to the RIAS was "very fruitful not only from a professional but also from a personal point of view."

Valeria's short residence in Middelburg was in fact filled with opportunities to talk about her research, share ideas for future publications with fellow researchers, and think of new projects.





The Short-Term Fellow in the fall of 2020 was Emma Day from the Rothermere American Institute at the University of Oxford. Emma came to Middelburg to finish revising her doctoral thesis, "Out of the Silence: Women Protesting the AIDS Epidemic, 1980-2020," and transform it into a book manuscript.

Emma's research deals with the multiple ways in which women in the US have been affected by and, in turn, responded to the AIDS crisis since the 1980s.

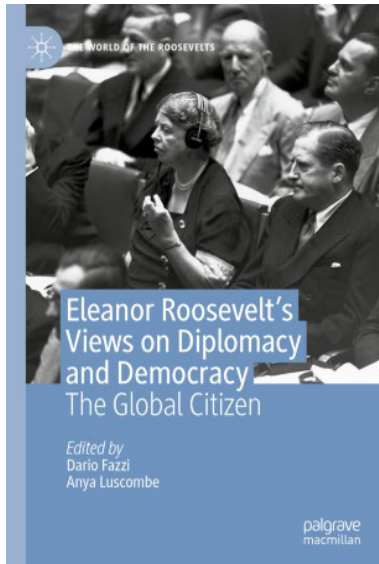
Shifting the focus of the story of HIV-AIDS both chronologically and thematically, Emma's thesis explores five different arenas of women's activism related to the epidemic: transmission and recognition; reproductive rights; safer sex campaigns for women who have sex with women (WSW); the carceral state; and the economics of healthcare access.

One of the most innovative characters of Emma's research is that it centers women in the AIDS epidemic and concurrent political debates, thus taking a novel approach to the study of the epidemic and the broader history of the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century United States.

In Middelburg, Emma has been busy writing a peer-reviewed article on the history of the pharmaceutical industry and healthcare access as part of the inaugural *Working Papers in Critical Disaster Studies on Historical Approaches to COVID-19*, an initiative of the Critical Disaster Studies program at New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study.

At the same time, Emma has had the time and opportunity to present the most important findings of her work during an internal seminar at the RIAS.

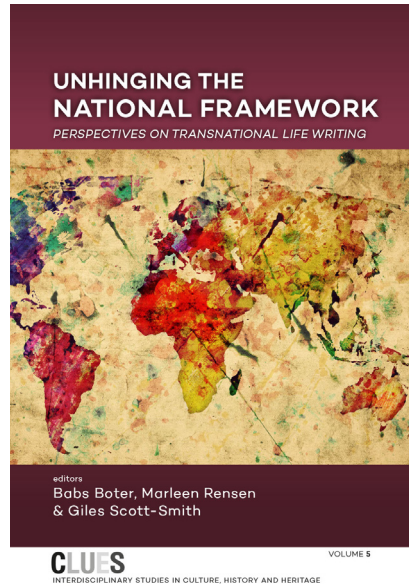
PUBLICATIONS



This book focuses on Eleanor Roosevelt's multifaceted agenda for the world. It highlights her advocacy of human rights, multilateral diplomacy, and transnationalism, and it emphasizes her challenge to gendered norms and racial relations.

The essays of this collection describe Eleanor Roosevelt as a public intellectual, a politician, a public diplomat, and an activist. She was one of the protagonists of the twentieth century and a proactive interpreter of the many changes it brought about.

Against them, she offered her commitment to people's education as an example of civic engagement. Such was the world Eleanor Roosevelt envisioned and tried to build—symbolically and practically—one where people, the citizens of the world, are at the center of international affairs.



This book, a collaboration between the RIAS and the VU, focuses on the twentieth century lives of men and women whose life-work and life experiences transgressed their 'official identities' as citizens of nation-states.

The chapters explore how these life-stories add innovative transnational perspectives to the histories of the world wars, decolonization, the Cold War and post-colonialism.

The subjects vary from artists, intellectuals, and politicians to ordinary citizens, each with their own unique set of experiences, interactions and interpretations.

By drawing on personal records, the book enable a richer understanding of how individuals move through, interact with and are affected by the major events of their time.

GRANTS & MORE

The RIAS Research Grants

As in any year, in 2020 the RIAS has welcomed a number of researchers from all over Europe and has facilitated their archival investigations and their stays in Middelburg through the awarding of research grants.

The RIAS will keep offering its travel grants in 2021 as well, in order to fulfill one of the Institute's main functions: to act as a major depository of materials on US history in Europe. We welcome scholars at all stages in their careers and we encourage them to apply. More info is available on our website at www.roosevelt.nl/research/rias-research-grants.

In addition to our traditional grants, the RIAS awards every year a Marilyn B. Young Research Grant, which is given to scholars who research the history of US foreign policy and its connections with social and civil rights history. In 2021 the recipient of the Marilyn B. Young Research Grant has been Hannah Walton from the University of Geneva, who joined us in Middelburg to finalize the research for her MA thesis titled "Women's Diplomacy and Inter-American Relations: Eleanor Roosevelt and Latin America, 1933-1962."



Farewell to Leon Gordenker

In May 2020 the RIAS lost one of its great friends and supporters: Professor Leon Gordenker. Lee was professor emeritus of politics at Princeton University, and one of the foremost experts on the UN and international organizations in general.

In the late 1940s he had worked for the UN's Information Division, and was sent to report on the Korean War in the early 1950s, before switching to academia. Lee took a close interest in our Institute, and was always ready to offer guidance when it was needed.

A resident of Zeeland in his retirement, he faithfully participated in our events for as long as he was physically able, and even donated his scholarly book collection to the RIAS. He will be sadly missed.





Roosevelt Institute for American Studies

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