

Ms. Darja Ferlež
Minister Plenipotentiary and Political Counselor
Republic of Slovenia



Ms. Darja Ferlež is the Minister Plenipotentiary and Political Counselor at the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Washington, having assumed the post in the fall of 2020. She oversees multiple portfolios including those covering the Congress of the United States of America and bilateral relations between Slovenia and the United Mexican States as a non-resident representative. Since joining the Foreign Service in 2004, she has served mainly in the European and Middle East departments. Prior to her current role, Ms. Ferlež served as the Minister Plenipotentiary in Ljubljana for the United States and Canada Desk at the Department for North and Latin America and the Caribbean and as the Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Tel Aviv. Ms. Ferlež earned a bachelor's degree in political science (focus in international relations) and a master's degree in political studies (focus in American studies) from the University of Ljubljana. Beyond her native Slovene, she is fluent in English, Italian, and Croatian. Outside of her career, Ms. Ferlež enjoys the many cultural and sporting amenities offered in Washington, D.C. and exploring the vast American continent with her family.



Ms. María Jesús Fernández García
Trade Commissioner
Trade Commission of Spain in Chicago

Ms. Fernandez is the Trade Commissioner of Spain for the Midwest. During her career, she has also served as Director General for International Financing at the Ministry of Economy and Finance; held senior positions at the Bank of Spain, where she was Head of the International Relations Division and Head of the European Affairs Division; worked at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, representing Spain at the Executive Board as Senior Advisor and Alternate Executive Director respectively; and held the position of Head of the President's Office and Deputy Director of the Studies Department at the Defense of Competition Tribunal. Most recently, she was Executive Director at ICEX-Invest in Spain, where she also held the position of Director of Financing and Investor Relations.



2022
World Affairs Conference
Presenter Biographies



Dr. Abel Gomez Gutierrez
Professor
Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit



Originally from Lima de Abajo, Municipality of Comostela, Nayarit, Mexico, Professor Gutierrez earned his PhD in Social Sciences from UAM-X and is currently a research professor at the Autonomous University of Nayarit, where he collaborates in programs on political science, Korean studies, and local economic development. His research interests include international migration, transnationalism, and local-community development issues. Over the course of his career, he has been a guest professor at multiple universities, an international consultant for issues of migration and community development, and a coordinator of a research group on international and internal migration and transnationalism in Nayarit. He has participated in over 100 national and international academic forums, and he is the author of three books.



Mr. Bill S.C. Huang
Director General
Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Denver

Bill S. C. Huang is Director General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Denver, Colorado. Mr. Huang received his B.A. from the Department of English at National Taiwan Normal University, an M.A. from the Graduate School of Journalism at National Taiwan University, and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Mr. Huang has been a professional in the Taiwanese diplomatic service for nearly twenty years. Before coming to the Denver office, he served the Republic of China (Taiwan) in its Home Office, Singapore, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Republic of Palau, and Atlanta, Georgia, among others.

Dr. Margaret Jacobs
Professor and Director, Center for Great Plains Studies
University of Nebraska at Lincoln



Dr. Margaret Jacobs is the Charles Mach Professor of History and the Director of the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Of settler background, she collaborates with Rosebud Lakota journalist Kevin Abourezk on Reconciliation Rising, a multimedia project that showcases Indigenous people and settlers who are working together to honestly confront painful histories, promote meaningful dialogue between Natives and non-Natives, and create pathways to reconciliation. Jacobs is also the co-founder and co-director of the Genoa Indian School Digital Reconciliation Project, which digitizes government records related to the Genoa school as an act of bringing history home to tribal nations and promoting truth-seeking about the boarding schools among all Americans. Jacobs has published more than 35 articles and 4 books, primarily about the U.S. government's century-long policy and practice of Indigenous child removal. She published *After One Hundred Winters: In Search of Reconciliation on America's Stolen Lands* in 2021.



Dr. Brett Mayfield
CEO
White River Health & Education

Brett Mayfield has been an international leader in guiding woman's self-defense for over 30 years and has taught these programs in the United States, France, Germany, England, Canada, Japan, and India. He has been studying traditional martial arts since the age of six and holds high martial art rank in Karate, Jujutsu, Aikido, and Judo. Furthermore, he has a PhD in Integrated Medicine (China) and a Doctor of Psychology degree, and he is a Public Health Officer for the State of Vermont. He serves on many local, national, and international non-profit boards dealing with woman and children's health and wellbeing, restorative justice, community health, and classical martial arts philosophy.



2022
World Affairs Conference
Presenter Biographies



Mr. Sergey Melnitchenko
Photographer and Founder of MYPH Collective, Photography School & Gallery



Sergey Melnitchenko was born in Mykolaiv, Ukraine, (located just 60 miles NW of Kherson) in 1991. He began taking photographs in 2009 and in 2018 founded the MYPH, a school for conceptual and art photography. He is also a member of the Ukrainian Photo Alternative (UPHA). Melnitchenko is a winner of multiple Ukrainian and international competitions, including Berlin's Leica Oskar Barnack Newcomer Award in 2017. In 2020, he was nominated for Amsterdam's prestigious Foam Paul Huf Award that recognizes generational talent demonstrating a personal visual language and style. Melnitchenko's work has appeared in over 70 publications, and he has published nine books of photography.



Ms. Itandewi (Ita) Mendoza
ID&R State Coordinator
Title 1 Part C Migrant Education Program

Itandewi (Ita) Mendoza was born and raised in Mexico City. At the age of 13 years old, Ita and her family migrated to the U.S. Ita graduated from Harvard High School and attended college at the University of Nebraska at Kearney where she earned a bachelor's degree in education. After graduating from college, she went back to her U.S. hometown where she coordinated and taught the English Learner program at Harvard Public School for 13 years. During her years teaching at Harvard School, Ita completed her studies and earned a master's degree in school counseling and got principalship certification. In 2019, Ita started working at the Educational Unit 9 as the state Identification & Recruitment coordinator for the Title 1 Part C Migrant Education Program.



2022
World Affairs Conference
Presenter Biographies



Ms. Sonia Nazario
Keynote Speaker



Sonia Nazario, who grew up in Kansas and in Argentina, has written extensively from Latin America and about Latinos in the United States. She is an award-winning journalist whose stories have tackled some of this country's most intractable issues -- hunger, drug addiction, immigration -- and have won some of the most prestigious journalism and book awards, including two Pulitzer Prizes. She was also a finalist for a third Pulitzer in Public Service. A fluent Spanish speaker of Jewish ancestry whose personal history includes living in Argentina during the so-called dirty war, Nazario spent decades reporting and writing about social issues for U.S. newspapers. She is best known for "Enrique's Journey," her story of a Honduran boy's struggle to find his mother in the U.S. Published as a series in the *Los Angeles Times*. It won more than a dozen awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, the George Polk Award for International Reporting, the Grand Prize of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists Guillermo Martinez-Márquez Award for Overall Excellence. It was turned into a book by Random House that became a national bestseller, a freshman read at 100 universities, and required reading at hundreds of high schools across the country. A young adult version of Enrique's Journey was published in 2013 aimed at middle schoolers.

When a national crisis erupted in 2014 over the detention of unaccompanied immigrant children at the border, Nazario returned to Honduras to report on the crisis and published an article in *The New York Times* that detailed the violence causing the exodus and argued that it is a refugee crisis, not an immigration crisis. After the piece was published, she addressed the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the U.N. General Assembly, and gave many interviews to national media, including *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *NBC's Meet the Press*, *Anderson Cooper 360*, and *Al Punto with Jorge Ramos*.

Nazario is a graduate of Williams College and has a master's degree in Latin American Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. She began her career at *The Wall Street Journal*, and later joined the *Los Angeles Times*. She has honorary doctorates from Mount St. Mary's College and Whittier College. She spent the past decade recruiting attorneys to provide pro-bono asylum representation to unaccompanied minors and won multiple awards for her humanitarian efforts. She serves on the advisory boards of several non-profits. She has been named among the most influential Latinos by *Hispanic Business Magazine* and a "trendsetter" by *Hispanic Magazine*. In 2012, *Columbia Journalism Review* named Nazario among "40 women who changed the media business in the past 40." In 2020, *Parade Magazine* named Nazario one of "50+ Most Influential Latin-American Women in History."

She is now at work on her second book.

Mr. Ziteife Obi
Lutheran Family Services



Ziteife Obi works at Lutheran Family Services as a Supervisor for Resettlement Services. He has a bachelor's degree in International Relations and a master's degree in Migration and Refugee Studies.

He has worked in the field of international displacement since 2014, working in an academic and a humanitarian capacity in the USA, Uganda, South Sudan, and Egypt.



Dr. Moises Park
Associate Professor of Spanish
Baylor University

Moisés Park is an Associate Professor of Spanish and has taught literature, cinema, and culture in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures at Baylor University since 2016. He holds a PhD from UC Davis (2010). His research interests are literature, film, masculinity, Otherness, Orientalism, and popular culture. He is the author of twenty articles and book chapters and one monograph, *Desire and Generational in Chilean Literature and Film* (2014), and co-editor of the collection *Here Comes the Flood: Perspectives of Gender, Sexuality, and Stereotype in the Korean Wave* (2022). He is currently working on a second monograph examining representations of the Korea(s) in the Americas. He has published two books of poetry: *El verso cae al aula* (2017) and *Poemas marciales* (2019), which was published in Spanish and English. He owns 24 or 25 guitars. He hopes to manage his midlife crisis by writing and playing music.

**Dr. Vladimír Polách, Ph.D., M.Phil., Mgr.
Palacký University in Olomouc
Czech Republic**



Dr. Vladimír P. Polách has degrees in general history, Czech language and literature, and Nordic medieval history of the Viking Age, including a Ph.D. in general history from Palacký University. He has presented at numerous conferences, published twenty-one articles, and written three books on medieval Scandinavian history, modern Czech media, and cyberpunk literature. He has held positions as department head of the Department of IT and Technical Support and vice-dean for infrastructure for the Faculty of Arts at Palacký University; the Frank A. Belousek Distinguished Scholar and Visiting Professor at UNL; and, currently, Assistant Professor and head of the Book and Editorial Studies division of the Department of Czech Language and Literature at Palacký University.



Dr. Mahabir Pun

Mahabir Pun is a teacher, social entrepreneur, and activist living in Nepal. In 2007, Pun was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award, considered to be the Nobel Prize of Asia, and received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of Nebraska later that year. In 2014 he was inducted into the Internet Hall of Fame in the US in recognition of his work to bring wireless computer technology to remote mountain areas. He will be presented with the distinguished alumnus award during the international alumni weekend events and International Food Festival at UNK on November 13, as part of the lead-up to the James E. Smith Conference on World Affairs.

Dr. Roberto Razeto
Head of International Affairs
IULM University



“Head of International Affairs at IULM University, Dr. Razeto, coordinator of the Master in Communication for International Relations (MICRI) at the same University. Since 2012, he has been a strategic communications consultant on climate change for The World Bank Group. Co-founder of the Citizens' Platform on Climate Change for a Sustainable World project with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, he also holds the position of Managing Director for the international shipping company Fwarders, with responsibility for the development of sustainable transportation operations. A journalist, Ph.D. in visual and media studies, he holds a B.A. in philosophy from Milan State University (ITA), with an M.A. in Aesthetics, an M.A in Public Affairs from American University in Washington, D.C., and in Business Strategy from Darden Business School at the University of Virginia. Previously, he worked as a communications strategist at Boehringer Ingelheim in Barcelona and at the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. He has lived in Nepal, the United States and Spain and is fluent in four languages.



Ms. Yolima Rey Rosas

Yolima Rey Rosas is an educator and multidisciplinary researcher who focuses on instructional design and teaching methods. An alumna of UNK (2013), her training in Political Science and International Studies have led her to work in public service and international education in Colombia and Paraguay, where she obtained an MA in Government and Public Management. Originally from Colombia, Yolima has set roots in South America, the US, and the Middle East, and participated in academic exchanges in the Czech Republic and South Korea during her time at UNK. Her international experiences have played a central role in broadening her perspective on comparative politics and nation-building. Following her recent time in the United Arab Emirates, a growing area in her practice is the study of Latin-Arab relations in the 21st Century.



2022
World Affairs Conference
Presenter Biographies



Ms. Kael Welch-Sagheer
Former Education Coordinator
Institute for Holocaust Education
Lutheran Family Services



Kael Welch-Sagheer is a two-time UNK graduate (1991, 1996) who has lived in five different countries on four different continents. She is a teacher, a parent, a friend, a reader, and a thinker. Ms. Welch-Sagheer claims she is not, however, an expert in anything. The more she learns, the more she realize she does not know. Ms. Welch-Sagheer has spent the vast majority of her life trying to connect the dots that would reveal the picture of her life. But what she's discovered is just lines: some straight, some not, all intersecting and overlapping, creating the most awesome web of interconnection. She currently resides in Omaha, NE and most recently had the privilege of being the education coordinator for the Institute for Holocaust Education.



Dr. Sophia Wilson
Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Sophia Wilson is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Dr. Wilson received her Ph.D. from the University of Washington, was a visiting scholar at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute in 2015, and taught at the Harvard Ukrainian Summer Institute in 2017 and 2019. She was a Jerome Hall Postdoctoral Fellow at the Indiana University School of Law in 2012-13. Dr. Wilson is completing her book, *The Ukrainian Maidan Revolution: Causes and Nature of Social Mobilization*, an extensive account of interactions between the state and the grassroots revolutionary movement, as well as Russian state propaganda about the revolution. Her articles have appeared in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change*, *The Journal of Law and Courts*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, and other academic venues.