Presenter Bios

Mr. J.M. Ascienzo is the Government Relations Officer at the National Peace Corps Association, where he helps facilitate Peace Corps community advocacy efforts and advocates to Congress for improvements and expansion of the Peace Corps. Before joining NPCA, J.M. taught ESL in Asia, and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 2012 to 2015.

Mr. Maciej Bartkowski is Senior Director for Education & Research at International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC). He works on academic programs for students, faculty, and educators to support teaching, research and study on civil resistance. He is also adjunct faculty at Johns Hopkins University and a series editor of ICNC's Monograph Series.

Dr. Heidi Beirich leads the Southern Poverty Law Center’s (SPLC) Intelligence Project, “one of the most respected anti-terror organizations in the world,” according to the National Review. She is an expert on various forms of extremism, including the white supremacist, nativist and neo-Confederate movements as well as racism in academia. She oversees the SPLC’s authoritative, yearly count of the nation’s hate and hard-line, anti-government groups and is a frequent contributor to the SPLC’s investigative reports and speaker at conferences on extremism. Prior to joining the SPLC staff in 1999, Beirich earned a doctorate in political science from Purdue University. She is the co-editor and author of several chapters of Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction, published by the University of Texas Press in 2008.

Mr. Abdirizak Farah, is a Senior Policy Advisor with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of the Secretary, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), where he serves as a key expert and advisor on homeland security, civil liberties, and countering violent extremism. Additionally, Farah provides training and high level briefings for department leadership and conducts CVE training for DHS personnel and other law enforcement agencies. Prior to joining the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Farah worked for the City of Columbus as Coordinator where he developed and participated in the execution of a long term strategy that encompassed improved compliance of Title six of the 1964 Civil Rights act, the successful integration of immigrant/refugee communities into the social and commercial fabric of Columbus life, with marked improvement in the coordination of resources between the City and State to enhance the delivery of
vital public services. He was also the host of the TV Show, Global Columbus on Government Channel-3. Before joining Mayor Michael B. Coleman’s team, Farah demonstrated his leadership skills while working for the United Nations as Political Office where he worked on national reconciliation, grass-root level institution building and other capacity building initiatives, including conflict resolution, economic development and disarmament efforts.

Ms. Olivia Hauck, from Irondequoit, N.Y., graduated May 2016 with a degree in advertising and public relations from Rochester Institute of Technology's College of Liberal Arts and is the co-chief executive officer for It's Time.

Dr. Qamar-ul Huda is a Senior Policy Advisor for U.S. Secretary John Kerry’s Office of Religion and Global Affairs (RGA) at the U.S. Department of State where he focuses on the interface of religious dynamics and religious actors with foreign policy. Prior to joining the Secretary’s Office, he served as a secondee for the State Department’s Bureau of Counterterrorism to Hedayah: The International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) based in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, where he served as the first Director of the Department of Dialogue and Collaboration. At Hedayah, he designed, coordinated, and executed key engagement strategies for government and NGOs to mitigate violent extremism, and designed multilateral collaboration strategies to prevent violent extremism. Dr. Huda was listed in the Muslim 500: The World’s Most Influential Muslims in 2016 published by the Royal Strategic Islamic Centre in Amman, Jordan. He is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Georgetown University's Conflict Resolution Graduate Program. He’s published over forty-five articles on peace-building, conflict resolution, violent extremism, & comparative ethics in international academic journals. He received research grants from the Social Science Research Council, American Academy of Religion, UCLA’s International Security Studies program, and he was a Fulbright scholar. He earned his doctorate from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in History of Islam/Middle East Studies, his Bachelor of Arts from Colgate University, and earned several certificates in advanced topics in religion and philosophy of law in Islamic seminaries and universities abroad.

Ms. Saba Ismail co-founded Aware Girls at the age of 15 with her sister. The organization is active in a context of militancy and religious extremism, complicated by poor governance, poverty and low literacy. The young women of AWARE Girls engage in CVE programs in which young people are prevented to join militant groups, create open spaces for dialogue, revitalize indigenous culture destroyed by militants and promote non-violence and pluralism in the community. She is an alumni of the International Visitors Leadership Program USA and the first female Hurford Youth Fellow with National Endowment for Democracy. Foreign Policy Magazine acknowledged her bravery and activism by recognizing her as one of 100 Leading Global Thinkers of 2013. She is a member of Global Youth Advocacy Team of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders who advocated for the adoption of resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security by the United Nations Security Council. She is a member of the Inter Agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding which worked for the adoption of SCR 2250 and is now working on implementation SCR 2250. Saba has been nominated for the Advisory Board of the Progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution which is the one of the next steps in the implementation of SCR 2250. Saba is advocating with policy makers in the U.S. to invest in youth led peacebuilding initiatives rather than the militarized interventions. She received an award from “The British High Commission in Islamabad” and was acknowledged in the “30 under 30 Campaign by the “National Endowment for Democracy” for her long struggle for democracy, peace and women’s rights.

Ms. Katherine Worboys Izsak is the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism’s (START’s) Education Director and the University of Maryland’s Undergraduate and Graduate Director in the Program in Terrorism Studies. She directs and teaches in the University of Maryland’s Global Terrorism Minor and Graduate Certificate in Terrorism Analysis. In these capacities, she works to develop new and innovative approaches to terrorism studies education. Izsak also works as an instructional designer, collaborating with other faculty researchers to develop professional training programs based on START-sponsored research, including trainings related to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programming, risk
communication, cybersecurity, and empirical analysis of terrorism data. Izsak holds faculty affiliations in the University of Maryland’s Department of Anthropology and Honors College. Izsak completed a B.A. in History at Duke University and a Ph.D. in History, with a secondary field in Anthropology, at the University of Michigan.

Mr. Sami Jamil Jadallah is a Palestinian-American immigrant and a US Army Veteran (66-68). He is a graduate of Indiana University with a BA (72), MPA (74) and JD (77) and an international legal and business consultant with over 35 years of experience in the US, the Middle East, and Europe. Over the course of his career, Sami held a key position in the construction, hospitality, investment, airlines and wildlife conservation. He was a General Counsel with a large construction company responsible for offices in Riyadh, Jeddah, Berlin, Paris, and London. Operating out of Geneva, Switzerland, he was responsible for investments and business development in Helsinki, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Dusseldorf, Munich, Paris and London. With many years in Morocco Sami served as “owner representative” on large hotel projects in Tangier, responsible for the country agency of a major gulf airlines and served as trustee and managing director of wildlife conservation foundation with over 100 employees. Sami was a founder and served on the board of trustee of United Palestinian Appeal of Washington, the leading not for profit dedicated to education and health. Sami is the Founder and Executive Director of the New Arab Foundation and a Director of the Arab Peace Corps.

Ms. Kailun Jiang, from Beijing China, graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology’s Saunders College of Business. She runs the public relations department for It’s Time.

Ms. Jessica Kellner currently serves as co-Chief Executive officer for It’s Time. It’s Time is an organization that focuses on combating violent extremism and educating the community. She graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology from Saunders’s College of Business with a Degree in New Media Marketing.

Mr. Saeed A. Khan is Lecturer of Near East & Asian Studies at Wayne State University, teaching courses on Middle East and Islamic history, politics and culture, and where he also is a Fellow at the Center for the Study of Citizenship, with primary research on identity politics of Muslim diaspora communities in the US, UK and Europe. He is also a founding member and a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Social Policy & Understanding: a think tank promoting the analysis of US social and domestic policy. He is also a regular contributor to the BBC, NPR and Quartz and is a panelist on Turning Point for The National on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Achaleke Christian Leke currently serves as the National Coordinator of a youth led civil society organization in Cameroon; Local Youth Corner Cameroon. He is a member of the United Network of Young Peace builders. Leke was recently appointed Africa Regional Coordinator of the Commonwealth Peace Ambassadors Network. He recently won the Commonwealth Youth Award of Excellence in Development Work 2016. Born and raised in a community renown for youth involvement in violent extremist tendencies like; jungle justice, kidnapping, gangs, socio-cultural conflicts, he was a victim of radicalisation and violence, yet he succeeded in transforming himself from an agent of violence to an Ambassador of peace and change. Leke is currently championing youth action for peace and Peace/Countering Violent Extremism in Cameroon especially with the Boko Haram insurgences. He has developed a youth peace building training manual and video documentary which has empowered over 20,000 young people both in Cameroon and abroad. He has experience in consultation and drafting of a youth policy for peace building including; Youth Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace, The Amman Declaration on Youth Peace and Security, and advocated for the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and security.

Mr. Tony, McAleer, President, Life After Hate, is a former organizer for the White Aryan Resistance (WAR). He served as a skinhead recruiter, proprietor of Canadian Liberty Net (a computer operated voice messaging center), and manager of the racist rock band, Odin’s Law. Tony was eventually found to have contravened Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act that prohibits the dissemination of messages likely to expose
groups to hatred by telephone. Through his own journey through disengagement and deradicalization from the white supremacist groups and ideology to which he once belonged, he now works to assist people who are where he once was. With a mission to inspire individuals and communities to a place of compassion and forgiveness for themselves and for all people he is now the Executive Director and co-founder of Life After Hate, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization comprised of former members and leaders of the extreme far right dedicated to outreach, education, and research in the arena of disengagement and deradicalization from extremist groups.

Mr. Hardy Merriman is President of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC). His work focuses on how grassroots civil resistance movements around the world can successfully fight for rights, freedom, and justice. He lectures widely to scholars, practitioners, and members of civil society.

Ms. Aleksandra Nesic, Ph.D., is a faculty of human and inclusive security, and international education at the School for International Training, Graduate Institute of World Learning, as well as the Visiting Faculty at the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), US Special Operations Command. Nesic works in intercultural education, conflict resolution and peacebuilding programs in the US and internationally. Her research areas include political violence, social movements, psycho-cultural and ethnic-identity of youth in conflicts, with a special focus on the Middle East / North Africa and the Balkans / East-Central Europe regions. Nesic pioneered a number of Global Citizenship academic and co-curricular initiatives during her tenure at the Florida State University. She is also a senior partner and research analyst at Valka-Mir, LLC, a human terrain intelligence research firm, and is an active member of several international organizations focused on conflict resolution and peace education.

Mr. Lakshitha Saji Prelis is the Director, Children & Youth Programs, Search for Common Ground & Co-Chair, Inter-Agency Working Group, Youth and Peacebuilding. Mr. Prelis has over twenty years’ experience working with youth, youth movements and youth focused organizations in various conflict and transition environments in West & East Africa, Central Asia to South and Southeast Asia. 5yrs ago he co-founded and has been co-chairing the first UN-CSO-Donor working group on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding that helped in successfully advocating for the historic UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. Mr. Prelis has served as an adviser to governments and governmental agencies from countries such as Nepal, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Haiti and Uganda, developing training programs, drafting policy frameworks and designing community participation programs. Mr. Prelis is a speaker and moderator at many international on the topic of engaging youth as partners to prevent violent extremism and promote peace. He was a discussant at UNDP’s Global Meeting on Preventing Violent Extremism & Promoting Inclusive Development; moderated the public launch of the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security with Deputy Secretary General of the UN; and supported the first Youth Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace. Mr. Prelis obtained his Master's Degree in International Peace & Conflict Resolution with a Concentration in International Law from the School of International Service at American University in Washington, DC.

Mr. Michael Rolince is a former Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s Washington Field Office Counterterrorism Division. Currently he is an independent consultant supporting the FBI’s Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Office. Rolince is an expert in counterterrorism, intelligence and counterintelligence investigations and operations. He currently holds the position of Senior Advisor to the FBI, having retired as the Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s Washington Field Office (WFO) Counterterrorism Division. He served as the Acting Assistant Director of the FBI’s Intelligence Directorate, and Chief, International Terrorism Operations Section, and has extensive operational experience in targeting terrorist groups and crafting responses to major terrorist incidents, including the attacks at Khobar Towers, the East Africa Embassy bombings, the Millennium conspiracy, the attack on the USS Cole and the attacks of September 11, 2001. As a CVE Senior Advisor, Rolince consults with multiple federal intelligence community agencies in addition to local, state and federal law enforcement, focusing on building capacity and resiliency at all levels. Rolince was a founding member of the FBI – Arab American and Muslim Advisory Council; he served two
terms on the Board of Directors of the FBI’s InfraGard program, a public-private partnership dedicated to protecting American infrastructure; and currently serves on the Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS) Advisory Board. As a member of the Senior Executive Service, Rolince received multiple commendations to include the FBI Director's Award for Excellence and the Presidential Rank Award, in recognition of his continuous efforts over three decades of service at the FBI, to mitigate significant threats to the United States.

**Dr. Mary Hope Schwoebel’s** areas of expertise include preventing and countering violent extremism, peacebuilding and statebuilding, governance and development. Schwoebel has 30 years’ experience working in international affairs, conducting research, teaching, training, and facilitating dialogues in South America, Africa, South Asia and the Middle East. She spent 12 years working and living in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, where she managed development, governance and humanitarian assistance programs for UNICEF, USAID, Catholic Relief Services and Peace Corps. In Washington, she has worked as a Senior Program Officer at the United States Institute of Peace and at InterAction. She has published on a wide variety of topics including book chapters, op-eds, policy papers, and journal articles. Most recently Schwoebel has conducted research for USAID on the transborder aspects of violent extremism in the Horn of Africa and on gender and violent extremism in East and West Africa. She is currently Guest Editor of a special issue of the Journal of Peacebuilding and Development entitled *Peacebuilding Approaches to Preventing and Transforming Violent Extremism*.

**Mr. Tony Sgro** is the Founder and CEO of EdVenture Partners (EVP). EVP builds industry-education partnerships on over 800 universities for societal challenges by connecting students, educators and industry leaders. Sgro has more than 40 years of experience in marketing, advertising and promotion. Sgro and his organization created and manage the P2P: Challenging Extremism program, a global university initiative to counter hate and extremism sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and Facebook, currently on 95+ universities in 30 countries, and growing. Tony has been a featured speaker at events sponsored by the National Counterterrorism Center in Washington, D.C., the Belgian Ministry of Security and Interior’s Security Day, Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) In Prague, Czech Republic, the Sovereign Challenge, LinCT (Learning in Counter Terrorism) in Los Angeles, Strong Cities Network, Antalya, Turkey, IO Conference, London, numerous FBI Conferences and many other CVE related conferences.

**Dr. Juliette Shedd** is currently the Associate Dean at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University and teaches introductory courses and courses on terrorism, extremism, global conflicts, and ideologies. She holds a Ph.D. and M.S. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University and a BA in Political Science and Psychology from George Washington University. She has published on civil wars, the Caucasus, religious violence, terrorism and media and conflict. Her research includes work on the relationship of media to conflict, specifically focused on media coverage of terrorism, social dynamics of extremism, the role of women in political violence and social media and conflict.

**Ms. Brett Steele**, serves as Acting Deputy Director of the CVE Task Force for the Department of Homeland Security. From 2013 to 2016, Steele served as Senior Counsel to the Deputy Attorney General and coordinated the Department of Justice’s efforts to build community resilience against violent extremism. Steele also Chairs the Department of Justice Arab- and Muslim-American Engagement Advisory Committee and Vice Chairs the Attorney General’s Advisory Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities. Before joining the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, she coordinated Departmental CVE policy through the Office of Legal Policy. Steele graduated with a B.A. from University of California, Berkeley, and a J.D. from UCLA.

**Ms. Josephine Stommel** is an undergraduate student double majoring in Interfaith Leadership Studies B.A. and Spanish B.A., and minoring in International Studies at Elizabethtown College. Josephine presented her research on a global analysis of peace education, religion, and terrorist groups in Nigeria, Pakistan, and Northern Ireland at the college’s Scholarship and Creative Arts Day (SCAD). She is the president of the No Boundaries international club, treasurer of the Circle K club, and a member of the Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society. Josephine intends to pursue a career related to International Education.
Kate Sudar, from Cleveland, Ohio, graduated in May 2016 from Rochester Institute of Technology’s College of Imaging Arts and Sciences with a degree in illustration. She is head of the department of advertising and public relations for It’s Time.

Dr. Stevan Weine is a Professor of Psychiatry, Director, International Center on Responses to Catastrophes, Director of Global Health Research Training, Center for Global Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is a psychiatrist, is a researcher, writer, teacher and clinician. His scholarly work focuses on the impact of trauma and migration on individuals, families, and communities. Over the past 15 years, Dr. Weine has demonstrated a strong commitment to patient-oriented research and mentoring new investigators, with continuous federal funding as Principal Investigator since 1998. His overall research mission is to develop, implement, and evaluate psychosocial interventions that are feasible, acceptable, and effective with respect to the complex real-life contexts where migrants and refugees live. He was awarded two Career Scientist Awards from the National Institute of Mental Health on “Services Based Research with Refugee Families” and “Labor Migration and Multilevel HIV Prevention.” He was principal investigator of a National Institute of Mental Health funded research study called “A Prevention and Access Intervention for Survivor Families” that investigated the Coffee and Family Education and Support intervention with Bosnian and Kosovar families in Chicago. Weine is author of two books. When History is a Nightmare: Lives and Memories of Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Rutgers, 1999) and Testimony and Catastrophe: Narrating the Traumas of Political Violence (Northwestern, 2006).

Ms. Erin E. Wilson has worked for various U.S. Government agencies for more than a decade on issues pertaining to preventing and countering violent extremism (CVE), terrorist threats and propaganda, and radicalization and recruitment to violence. Ms. Wilson serves as the Deputy Director for Research & Analysis at the new interagency CVE Task Force, charged with integrating and synchronizing federal efforts to prevent violent extremism and promote community resilience. She also serves as a Senior Interagency Coordination Officer at the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) supporting U.S. efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism worldwide. In this role, she coordinates and integrates domestic CVE efforts with DHS, DOJ, and FBI as well as other departments and agencies to implement the domestic White House CVE strategy. Prior to this role, Ms. Wilson served as a Senior Analyst covering CVE, Radicalization, and Counterterrorism for NCTC, assessing worldwide trends, threats, and opportunities. From 2008-2010, she served as NCTC’s first Representative to State Department. Before joining NCTC, she served as a Latin America Counternarcotics and Policy Analyst for the Department of Defense. Ms. Wilson earned her MSc in Comparative Politics/Conflict Studies with an emphasis on radicalization to violence from the London School of Economics and received her BA in International Relations from Michigan State University.