

UCD Clinton Institute for American Studies

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Progressivism in America: Past, Present and the Future

*Conference examines problems
and possibilities, reports Dr
Jack Thompson.*

On November 8th and 9th last, the UCD Clinton Institute for American Studies hosted a conference, “**Progressivism in America: Past, Present and Future**”. Organised in partnership with the Roosevelt Institute, a leading think tank located in New York, the conference discussed the challenges facing the progressive movement in the United States and explored potential solutions to policy challenges such as health care, climate change, rising inequality and terrorism, as well as the consequences of the emergence of the Tea Party.

The conference began with a video message from former President William J. Clinton, who praised the work of the Clinton Institute and expressed his support for the aims of the conference. Speakers included Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, prominent journalists such as E.J. Dionne, Christopher Caldwell, Jonathan Alter, and Fintan O’Toole and distinguished historians such as Alan Brinkley and Lisa McGirr.

Panel topics included the history of progressivism; contemporary policy challenges; foreign policy; future prospects; and the view from Ireland and Europe. Several themes emerged from these discussions. One was the need to remain faithful to the spirit and values of the tradition established by Theodore Roosevelt, his cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt and other progressive political leaders while also developing a new set of policies and strategies that are



Some of the attendance at the Progressivism conference.

relevant to contemporary challenges and which can facilitate the progressive agenda.

This led to a second theme: the limits imposed by the American political system — which was designed to inhibit rapid change — and by the increasing radicalism of the Republican Party, which has come to see any kind of compromise with Democrats as a betrayal of conservative ideals, regardless of the content. These factors underscored a third theme, the pragmatism of the Clinton and Obama administrations, both of which pursued progressive agendas but faced ferocious opposition from conservatives. As a result, each faced numerous setbacks and even substantial victories, such as the passage of the Dodd-Frank financial reform bill, or the health care reform bill, were less

progressive than many had hoped.

Hence, a fourth theme of the conference was the reality that implementing progressive policies depends upon winning political battles in Washington DC and at the state and local levels, as Republicans have made it clear that they will resist any progressive change, even if it might be to their political benefit, as in the case of immigration reform. Most of the participants were optimistic about the future, citing demographic trends and policy challenges that favour progressive priorities. However, many speakers also cautioned that any substantial changes would be slow in coming, given the structural and partisan challenges facing progressives.

To view video recordings of the proceedings please visit: www.ucdclinton.ie/ProgressivismSymposium

Diaspora and the Knowledge Economy

Dr Martin Russell reports on a stimulating discussion.

In association with the United States Embassy and the UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School, the UCD Clinton Institute hosted an impressive discussion on Diaspora and the Knowledge Economy in Newman House on Wednesday, October 2nd last. Chaired by Kingsley Aikins, Founder and CEO of Diaspora Matters, the discussion was led by Sonal Shah (Harvard University) and response was provided by Dr. Jacob Eisenberg of UCD Smurfit.

Opening the event, Prof. Liam Kennedy (UCD Clinton Institute) noted the importance of developing fresh insights and global comparative awareness amongst academics, policymakers, and practitioners on topics relating to migration and diaspora.

Mr. Aikins built upon the emerging fascination with diaspora matters across the globe by describing the depth and layered approaches to these topics in Ireland. Identifying Ireland as a global knowledge and practice leader in this space, Mr. Aikins drew out some foundational insights on diaspora engagement from his publication, the Global Diaspora Strategies Toolkit, in areas such as FDI and tourism.

Ms. Shah's address offered several pivotal developments for diaspora engagement approaches both in Ireland and

elsewhere. Narrating her own diasporic journey from low level income villages in India to work with Goldman Sachs, Google, the Obama administration, and now Harvard University, she charted three strategic approaches to engagement. Focusing on her work with Indicorps, she explained how early perceptions of engagement (based on notions that if you were going to make it in India you would have to make it out) were challenging in developing effective engagement. She stressed the importance of service in changing these perceptions and argued that with over 35 programmes now offered by Indicorps, there were three main audiences to focus on:

- 1) The generation of young people who want to connect through their heritage
- 2) The generation who want to invest through Diaspora Capital
- 3) Retirees who want opportunities to participate in global economies and growth.

This amalgamative approach allows for a rich, diverse engagement that provides important engagement in India focused on circular migration, talent exchange, knowledge transfer and various development agendas. Ms. Shah then outlined the importance of connecting and collaborat-

ing with internal diasporas. Pinpointing the remarkable impact of such migrant groups in the United States in areas such as innovation and job creation, Ms. Shah described how these networks can be worked in and for Ireland. Illustrating examples from academic alumnis, affinities, and corporations, she explained how "borders are now horizontal", and people are now looking for such networks.

Dr. Eisenberg's thoughtful response explored the societal and organisational complexities of identity and their correlation to the topic being discussed. He identified three strands under the framework of diaspora membership as a matter of identity.

- 1) Feelings as Individual Based
- 2) Cultural Connects such as Ideas, Attitudes, and Beliefs
- 3) Actions and Behaviour.

He identified how multiple identities, as central components of contemporary diasporic engagement, can be flowed through collective memories, commitments to ancestry, and the ideal of return. Furthermore, he explored how issues of threat, crisis, and prestige act as key connectors for diasporic communities. Centred on answering why diasporas care, Dr. Eisenberg outlined how avoiding value conflicts for migrant communities, synergising hyphenated identities, and asking for meaningful engagement can shape Irish and global diaspora transfers.

Reports From the Frontline

The challenges and dangers of covering conflict in countries like Syria were outlined by Guardian Middle East Correspondent Martin Chulov and leading Middle East freelance journalist Rania Abouzeid who were the speakers at the first of a series of public talks entitled From the Frontline on Tuesday, November 26th, last. The series, which will feature other leading journalists and commentators in the coming months, is being staged by the UCD Clinton Institute in association with The Irish Times. Dublin City Council and the Culture Lab are also partners.

The event in the Wood Quay Venue heard both journalists outline the complexity of the Syrian conflict and the difficulties they faced in covering it. In a lively Q & A session with the audience, they explained that verification of facts, not least about alleged massacres and use of chemical weapons, was a constant concern. Abouzeid stated that she rarely trusted any form of communication other than face-to-face despite the plethora of communication devices available. This meant that she would prefer to travel into Syrian war-zones from her Beirut home to verify a story. The talk by the two journalists was a fascinating insight into the life of those reporting from the frontline and the demands made on them professionally and personally.

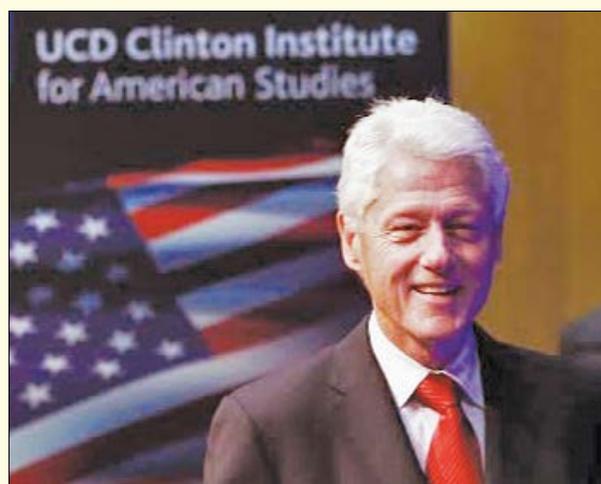


Frontline speakers Rania Abouzeid and Martin Chulov.

President Bill Clinton Visit

President Bill Clinton returned to the UCD Clinton Institute on October 9th to address a student audience and engage in questions on a wide range of topics. We were delighted to arrange this event which turned into an informal Q & A as the President spoke freely in response to student questions. Speaking on current global challenges, President Clinton noted that the biggest change he has noticed since he was President is in the way power is dispersed globally. He argued this cuts several ways, offering many opportunities to create change and reform, as with the Arab Spring, but it also makes it difficult to take concerted action on pressing problems such as climate change. He observed that the "politics and policy prescriptions are daunting" and expressed a "wish I could live to be 150 years old to see how it all turns out!" There were also questions on the NSA scandal, on Northern Ireland, and on the work of the Clinton Foundation.

We are grateful for President Clinton's continued interest in the work of the Institute.



The Ongoing Struggle for Civil Rights: The US, the North and the Rest of the World

Dr. Andrew Sanders reports on a lively meeting of minds.

Saturday October 5th last marked 45 years since the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association march in Derry which many historians consider to be the starting point of the Northern Ireland Troubles, after it sparked serious rioting following the decision of police to disperse marchers using batons and a water cannon. To mark the occasion, the UCD Clinton Institute, in conjunction with the John Moore Newman Fellowship, hosted an event which sought to draw together past, present and future research in the Institute.

"The Ongoing Struggle for Civil Rights: The United States, Northern Ireland and Worldwide" mixed together academic experts with key activists from civil rights campaigns in the United States, Northern Ireland, and Bahrain to create an analytical, yet vivid picture of global civil and human rights.

Brian Dooley, human rights activist and author of "Black and Green: The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland and Black America", the only existing comparative study of the two campaigns, chaired the first panel which featured Professor Father Thomas Murphy of Seattle University, Professor Peter Ling of the University of Nottingham and Minnijean Brown Trickey, a human rights activist who first entered global consciousness as part of the Little Rock Nine, a group of African-American students who enrolled at Little Rock Central High School in 1957.

Father Murphy outlined the historical dimension to civil rights in the US. His talk offered insights into possible links between Irish-America and the civil rights struggle in America and helped to establish the historical context for the talks that followed. Professor Ling offered a more contemporary analysis of civil rights in the US and particularly the image of Martin Luther King in contemporary US culture. Minnijean Brown Trickey then spoke, telling a captivated audience of her long associations with Ireland, and how she joined the group that became known as the Little Rock Nine. For her, as a young girl in Arkansas, the issue was simply about her right to attend school. The simple goals of civil rights activists was a recurring theme throughout the day.

The focus then turned to Northern Ireland. Dr Gareth Mulvenna detailed the issue of civil rights as it pertains to the loyalist and Protestant working class. He offered a scathing assessment of tactics used to undermine the loyalists' campaign and shared a great deal of his primary research on the topic. Dr Stuart Ross spoke on the issue of commemoration, using a comparative analysis of Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association marches from the 1960s with their ten-year anniversary marches, noting that in each case, the commemoration marches were actually better attended. Dr Niall O'Dochartaigh, of NUI, Galway, discussed the wider aims of civil rights in Northern Ireland, tapping into his research for his book "From Civil Rights to Armalites" as well as more recent work. The panel ended with a

powerful talk by Bernadette McAliskey, who spoke of her admiration for American civil rights activists like Minnijean. She emphasised the lessons she learned from visiting the United States and how these continue to influence her work with the South Tyrone Empowerment Programme.

The third panel focused on most contemporary campaigns; those commonly referred to as the 'Arab Spring'. Dr Mairead Collins spoke of the bureaucratic difficulties that are placed in front of Palestinians in the West Bank while Dr Rita Sakr assessed the Arab Spring in contemporary literature, drawing on a recent event that she organised at the Clinton Institute "Media and the Arab Spring". (See <http://www.ucdclinton.ie/MediaandtheArabSpring> for full details).

The final keynote speaker was Maryam al-Khawaja, Acting President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. She is the acting director because the director, her father Abdulhadi, is currently imprisoned in Bahrain, sentenced in 2011 to life imprisonment for his role in the 2011-2012 Bahraini Uprising. Her sister, Zainab has also served time in prison. Both have gone on extensive and traumatic hunger strikes in protest at their treatment. Maryam gave an impassioned talk about her work for civil and human rights in Bahrain, alluding to its importance in the wider 'Arab Spring', although she was careful to note that the uprising was neither exclusively Arab, nor were the connotations of the word 'spring' entirely appropriate for these events.

Best wishes to Dr. Ron Callan



Dr. Ron Callan has retired from UCD. Ron was a wonderful support and advisor to the Institute. He was involved in the creation of the Institute and helped secure its location within UCD. He also served on the Board of Management for many years and always made himself available to assist staff and students in any way he could. He will be greatly missed by us. We wish him all the best for his retirement and offer our heartfelt thanks.

Board Members of the Clinton Institute

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(Diaspora Matters)

Prof. Maurice Bric
(University College Dublin)

Mr Michael Carey
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From Russia with a mission

Alumni Voices: The journey from Stratford, Connecticut, to New York via Dublin and Moscow has been a great learning experience for Ellen Hewitt.

Just prior to moving to Dublin in September 2011, I was finishing off a two-year Russian adventure of teaching English, studying Russian, and submerging myself in the incredible culture of Moscow. Most of all, I became intrigued by Russia's attempts to compete in international power games, and how these machinations were conveyed so clearly in Russia's state-dominated media. My undergraduate degree had combined an English and Russian double major that focused on film and media studies. From the moment that I discovered the Clinton Institute's MA program in Media and International Conflict, I knew this was the perfect opportunity for me to pursue media studies while embarking on a crash course in foreign policy and conflict studies.

I'm the first to admit that it might seem strange for a Russophile to enroll in an Irish university at an institute of American Studies. But the Media and Conflict program might be the only program in the world to give me the framework I needed to explore my evolving passion. My degree combined political science, foreign policy, and journalism, but gave me the flexibility to apply my knowledge to my own interests. Furthermore, the program opened new doors in my post-Clinton Institute job search. A Public Diplomacy course introduced me to the concept of nation branding (the idea that the branding or reputation of a specific place can have a measurable impact on its trade, tourism, or even diplomatic efforts).

After finishing the MA program, I interned as an analyst at a Madrid-based country-branding consulting



Ellen Hewitt: currently an analyst at a small research and consulting firm in New York City.

firm, where I assisted in creating place branding strategies. The firm's CEO also invited me to collaborate on a guide to country branding with him: an assignment which involved interviewing him on how a country's movies, fashion, economy, or even the Olympics can impact its "brand," and crafting these interviews into a book-length narrative.

Thanks to my Russia-specific work at the Clinton Institute and my consulting internship, I am currently an analyst at a small research and consulting firm in New York City that specializes in business intelligence and geopolitical analysis. We operate through a global network of experts in many different industries and countries. On a daily basis, I interview these experts and write my findings into client recommendations. My projects range from market entry recommendations for companies interested in Russia, crafting lobbying strategies to minimize negative effects of pending legislation, and even uncovering sinister Kremlin intervention in failed Russian business deals. It can be intense work, but I love it. My studies at the Clinton Institute gave me the opportunity to widen my geopolitical knowledge and hone my analytical skills, and without a doubt, propelled me into my dream career.

Ellen Hewitt was a member of the Media and International Conflict class of 2011/12.

Coming Up...

From the Frontline: February

Summer School: July 6th–12th

Diaspora and Development Conference: September