



## ISHR Human Rights Research Fellowship

The ISHR Human Rights Research Fellowship will provide students with an opportunity to gain valuable research experience, while supporting the work of Columbia faculty conducting human rights-related research.

Students who receive the Fellowship are expected to complete approximately 80-120 hours of research assistance during the academic year. The research opportunities selected for the 2020-2021 academic year are available below. ISHR will award one research stipend per opportunity in the amount of \$1,500. Priority will be given to HRSMA and UHRP students.

Please contact us at [humanrightsed@columbia.edu](mailto:humanrightsed@columbia.edu) with any questions.

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**Project Title:** [The Frontlines of Peace: An Insider's Guide to Changing the World](#)

**Supervising Faculty:** [Severine Autesserre, Professor, Political Science, Barnard College](#)

### **Summary of Project:**

My forthcoming book, *The Frontlines of Peace: An Insider's Guide to Changing the World*, will be released on March 1 by Oxford University Press. At turns surprising, funny, and gut-wrenching, this book is the hopeful story of the ordinary yet extraordinary people who have figured out how to build lasting peace in their communities. Leymah Gbowee (the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner from Liberia) has penned the foreword, and Denis Mukwege (the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner from Congo) has written a very strong endorsement. Here is the [publisher's page](#) for the book, and you can also find more information on my [website](#).

### **Research Assistance:**

The specific job of the ISHR research assistant will be to work on a variety of tasks related to the book release, including helping me prepare for marketing and publicity, organize events, pitch journalists, influencers, and bloggers, etc. Time permitting, and depending on the knowledge and skills of the student, the student may also work on a combination of research and editing, along with a variety of other tasks. The research part would involve researching topics related to peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, wars, and violence in order to check facts and references and to identify relevant scholarly, policy, and news sources for the

spin-off Op Eds, interviews, and articles I plan to write based on the book. The editing part of the job would involve checking the draft of any text I write, providing constructive criticisms on my draft articles and grant proposals, and correcting any typos and English mistakes that might be in these documents (I am not a native speaker).

**Position requirements:**

- Current Columbia graduate or undergraduate human rights student in ISHR's programs
- Native-level command of American-English (meaning, if you are a native British-English speaker for example, you must be perfectly fluent in American-English, and able to edit a text without using any kind of British-English vocabulary.)
- Excellent writing skills
- Overall GPA and major GPA over 3.6
- Graduate student or, if an undergraduate, a junior or a senior
- Available at least 12 hours a week during the Spring semester, starting in January

Preference will be given to applicants with skills, knowledge, and/or experience related to the prospective RA's main tasks: helping with marketing and publicity, organizing events, pitching journalists, influencers, and bloggers, etc.

Please note that this is not necessarily a NYC-based position. As long as you have access to a good university library and an excellent and reliable internet network, you can complete the RA-ship from virtually anywhere in the world.

**Submission Requirements:**

To apply, please send an e-mail to Professor Autesserre ([sa435@columbia.edu](mailto:sa435@columbia.edu)) with the subject: "ISHR RA position" by November 8th. Please attach to your e-mail a resume, an unofficial transcript, and a writing sample. In the body of the e-mail, please write a short cover letter mentioning 1- what kind of experience, qualification, and/or training you have that is relevant for the position (please refer to the position description and position requirements); 2- which other skills, training, and experience you have that would be relevant to the project; and 3- which ISHR Program you are currently enrolled in (and/or will be enrolled in during Spring 2021).

Please also list the names of two Barnard or Columbia professors who know you well (no need for them to do anything at this time, I merely would like to know whom to contact if I have any questions about your research and writing skills). Lastly, please let me know where you anticipate being based during the Spring semester.

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**Project Title:** Government Abuse and Rebel Groups' Use of Terrorism

**Supervising Faculty:** Page Fortna, Harold Brown Professor of US Foreign and Security Policy, Department of Political Science

**Summary of Project:**

Under what conditions do rebel groups use terrorism as a tactic in armed conflict? Why do some groups use terrorism while others do not? Does the government's human rights record, including its history of civilian-targeted violence, reduce the likelihood of terrorism by eliminating violent challengers or does it increase terrorism by legitimizing it as a warranted response to government abuse? We argue that rebel groups are more likely to perpetrate acts of terrorism when their constituent population finds terrorism an appropriate tactic; when the legitimacy costs, the expected loss in legitimacy among a key audience associated with specific actions, are lower. Specifically, constituent populations are more likely to accept terrorism as legitimate when the government adversary has committed its own abuses, especially, but not exclusively, violations of physical integrity rights such as indiscriminate violence, extrajudicial killings, and other forms of civilian-targeted violence. In other words, a rebel group's legitimacy costs for terrorism are driven, at least in part, by the perceived legitimacy of the government adversary and prior exposure to civilian-targeted violence.

Existing research examining the relationship between government human rights violations and terrorism has not yet adequately tested the implications of the group level incentives for terrorism. Existing empirical work either analyzes the country level of analysis, ignoring group-level variation, or examines only groups that do use terrorism, without a comparison set of groups that could use terrorism, but don't. We make use of the new Terrorism in Armed Conflict (TAC) dataset, which measures the use of terrorism by rebel groups in intrastate armed conflicts from 1970-2013, and includes both groups that do and do not use terrorism. This project contributes to understanding the vicious cycles of civilian victimization and human rights violations associated with governments' abuse of power.

**Research Assistance:**

We are interested in working with a Research Assistant to help code data to measure our key explanatory variable of government abuse: systematic human rights violations targeted at specific populations in the context of civil war. Existing data captures governments' human rights records overall or incidents of civilian-targeted violence and repression. But, to our knowledge, the research program lacks a dataset that both covers a range of different types of government human rights violations and differentiates among targeted populations. We require this level of disaggregation, along with information to link targeted civilian populations to any rebel groups that claim these groups as a constituency, in order to test our claims. The research assistant would be involved in the development and refinement of the coding instrument, and finding, summarizing, and coding information on the extent and type of government human rights abuses targeted against specific marginalized populations during and prior to civil wars.

This research would be conducted in conjunction with, and under the supervision of, Professor Page Fortna in the Department of Political Science, as well as her co-author on this project, Michael Rubin, a recent Columbia PhD, currently an Assistant Research Professor in the Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut. The proposed time-frame is November 2020-May 2021, though it is flexible depending on the RA's needs.

**Submission Requirements:**

Interested applicants should submit a CV and a brief statement indicating their program of study (including degree program) and research interests, as well as relevant research experience and relevant coursework to [vpf4@columbia.edu](mailto:vpf4@columbia.edu). We will begin reviewing applications on November 9, but will continue to accept applications until the position is filled.

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**Project Title:** [Recognition of Autonomous Protocols and Community By-Laws in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

**Supervising Faculty:** [Lisa Sachs, Research Scholar in the Faculty of Law; Director, Center on Sustainable Investment](#)

**Summary of Project:**

Implementation of indigenous peoples' right to give or withhold free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in the context of oil, gas, and mining projects has been fraught. In principle, FPIC is meant to facilitate the participation of indigenous peoples in decisions that affect them and their lands, in recognition of their right to determine what happens to them and their lands, including in the context of large development projects. In practice, states have largely failed to operationalize the right to FPIC. Instead, many states have sought to facilitate a form of indigenous participation through the implementation of prior consultation processes that leave decision-making in the hands of the state.<sup>1</sup>

Prior consultation laws and regulations from the Latin American region have ultimately reflected and furthered the interests of already-powerful actors. In this context, some indigenous communities have developed autonomous protocols that reflect indigenous preferences as well as their customary rules and practices for consultation and consent processes. These protocols show promise as a means for indigenous peoples to redefine the "rules of the game" to better align consultation and consent processes with their interests and rights.

Building on the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment's (CCSI) research on the [political economy of indigenous and tribal communities right to FPIC](#) in the context of extractives

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<sup>1</sup> Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, Free, prior and informed consent: Addressing political realities to improve impact.

projects, we are engaged in action- and policy-oriented research that explores opportunities to further socialize and promote the recognition of and adherence to community protocols and community by-laws in different contexts.

**Research Assistance:**

The Fellow will work closely with CCSI researchers and focus on detailed desk-based research on autonomous protocols and community by-laws. This may include literature reviews and analysis, and interviews with external organizations working in the field of land governance and indigenous rights. Strong research and writing skills (including the ability to use academic databases and other online search techniques) are desirable, as is some knowledge or experience in the field of business and human rights, indigenous peoples' rights, and/or responsible land-based investment.

The initial phase of the project is expected to run through the Fall semester with the possibility of extension into the Spring.

**Submission Requirements:**

Applicants are requested to submit a cover letter, resume, and unedited writing sample to Nancy Siporin at [nsipor@law.columbia.edu](mailto:nsipor@law.columbia.edu) by November 8th.

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**Project Title:** Youth Activists and the Influence of Schooling

**Supervising Faculty:** Felisa Tibbitts, Lecturer and Co-Coordinator, Peace and Human Rights Education Concentration, Teachers College

**Summary of Project:**

As we know, activism, especially youth activism, is a powerful engine for the human rights movement. My study examines how recent U.S. high school graduates who were activists<sup>2</sup> while in high school describe the sources of their activism, and particularly the role (if any) of in-school experiences, such as teachers, formal curricula or extra-curricular activities in influencing their thinking and behavior. This qualitative study is based on data being collected through in-depth interviews with youth between the ages of 18 and 23 who were activists in high school.

Westheimer & Kahne (2004) as well as other researchers in the area of civics, or citizenship, education have recognized that pro-social illustrations of 'good citizenship' extend beyond participation in traditional democratic processes, such as voting, to those that pressure leaders to enact policies reflecting issues of social concern, and which support democratic processes

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<sup>2</sup> There can be differing understandings of the concept of "civic activism", however. We will therefore begin the interviews by sharing the following definition of this term: engagement in an action to bring about *political or social change*.

and the rule of law. These typologies have been called “social justice citizenship” as well as “social movement citizenship” and “active citizenship” (Zaff, Boyd, Li, Lerner and Lerner, 2010; Rynkiewicz and Zalewska, 2017).

Much civic education research, including ICCE/IEA, evaluates the impact of schooling on civic knowledge and attitudes through use of large-scale surveys or specific program evaluations. However, there is still little evidence of the extent to which school experiences lead to (civic) activism as opposed to civic knowledge or attitudes. My study “maps backwards” by interviewing young people and gaining their perspectives on the influence of schooling – and other factors – on their activism. I aim to fill a gap in the research by interviewing students who were engaged in (civic) activism during their high school period, exploring the impact of school experiences, and how those may intersect with other motivations or capacities for activism.

My key research questions are:

- How do youth engaged in activism in the U.S. (ages 18-23) present their motivations and influences on their topic(s) of interest?
- What role, if any, did their high school play in their topical choices, attitudes, and engagement in social or political issues?

#### **Research Assistance:**

The skill sets that will be required of the research assistant and which will be further cultivated in this fellowship include: literature review of links between schooling and activism; coding and organization of qualitative ‘chunks’ of data; additional analysis of patterns through use of analytical software.

In the first stage of assistance, lasting from the initiation of the fellowship until the end of December 2020, the student will be responsible for assisting in the transcription of the remaining interviews (which will be partially transcribed using Skype recordings of interviews). In addition, and in order to become better acquainted with the subject matter, the student will review the scholarship already in hand for the research project and identify additional sources.

In the second stage of assistance, beginning in January 2021, the student will work with me in the qualitative analysis of the interview data, including an initial pattern analysis (Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M., 1994) and use of NVivo qualitative analysis software.

#### **Submission Requirements:**

Please submit a CV and a cover letter to [ft2442@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:ft2442@tc.columbia.edu) by November 8th. Applicants should refer to relevant experience in qualitative analysis, including use of NVivo.

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**Project Title:** Menstruation: A Matter of Human Rights

**Supervising Faculty:** Inga Winkler, Lecturer in the Discipline of Human Rights in the Department of Political Science

**Summary of Project:**

Menstruation matters, and it matters for the realization of human rights. Menstrual stigma has profound effects on the rights to health, education, work, participation in public life, among others. As menstruation is gaining increasing attention at all levels, many organizations adopt the framing of human rights, which holds the promise of addressing menstrual stigma. Yet, current efforts are at risk of reductionism, tokenism, and instrumentalization. Many organizations use the frame of dignity, but focus narrowly on ensuring privacy and cleanliness, eschewing a more fundamental understanding of dignity as agency and autonomy. They address the socio-cultural dimension of menstruation, but only present culture as restriction and barrier to the realization of human rights, driven by Western liberalist understandings. They instrumentalize human rights to advance narrow, technical fixes in the form of menstrual products, hygiene interventions, and sanitation facilities. However, the menstrual movement is not monolithic, and grassroots organizations seem to adopt more nuanced and holistic framings of human rights that warrant in-depth exploration. The project critically assesses the menstrual movement and its employment of human rights framing, examining the promises, pitfalls, and renewed potential of human rights. At a conceptual level, it is embedded in critiques of the human rights 'enterprise' as risking to lose legitimacy and seeks to contribute to the potential of human rights from below.

The project combines empirical social science inquiry and normative human rights arguments. To examine the framing of human rights, it uses a combination of textual analysis of relevant documents, in-depth qualitative interviews, and (if the public health situation allows) participant observation at relevant events. The dataset includes UN documents, documents issued by members of the Global Menstrual Collective, and documents produced by locally-led organizations in South Asia and Southern and Eastern Africa as two menstrual hubs. The interviews focus on the motivations and understandings of the human rights frame: Why do organizations and movements adopt these frames? What do they see as the most pressing human rights issues in relation to menstruation? How do they understand terms such as "sanitary dignity" and "dignified menstruation"? Interviewees include civil society advocates, grassroots activists, staff members in international organizations, and government officials.

**Research Assistance:** The research fellow will assist with retrieving relevant documents as well as coding documents and potentially interview transcripts using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo.

**Submission Requirements:** Please submit a CV, cover letter, and writing sample to [inga.winkler@columbia.edu](mailto:inga.winkler@columbia.edu) by November 8th.

