



# FAMILY ROUTES

A Quarterly Newsletter by International Social Service-USA

## BOARD MEMBERS OF ISS-USA: PAST AND PRESENT



Ann L. Estin

### **Ann L. Estin completes three years as Chair of the ISS-USA Board of Directors**

Ann's leadership has transformed the board of directors and as a result, ISS-USA has grown and innovated. Ann led the organization's strategic planning during the pandemic, embraced ISS-USA's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) efforts, and welcomed a number of new board members during her tenure. Ann readily adapted to the ZOOM board meeting format and the board and its hard-working committees has accomplished a great deal though they have not met face to face since September 2019. Thank you Ann for your outstanding, efficient and thoughtful leadership and for helping ISS-USA achieve its goals on behalf of families separated by borders.



Susan Jacobs

### **Susan Jacobs is elected Chair of the ISS-USA Board of Directors**

Susan Jacobs is no stranger to leadership at ISS as she previously served as Vice Chair and currently serves as Chair of ISS Governing Board.

"I am honored and humbled to serve as the next Chair of the ISS Board of Directors. We will work to ensure that ISS continues to provide excellent services to reunite children and families separated across borders."

## The Executive Committee



Dr. Allison Blake, Vice Chair



Stacey Floam, Treasurer



Dr. T'Pring Westbrook, Secretary

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Rosalind Wright Harris (far right)



ISS-USA celebrates the life of and mourns the loss of Rosalind Wright Harris, 97, who died on April 15, 2021 at her home in Brunswick, Maine. She was born October 11, 1923 in Chicago. In 1946, she married Michael Marcus-Myers Harris, an architect with Harrison & Abramovitz in New York City, the very group that built the United Nations HQ in New York. They met when she was working for the State Department and was a member of the planning team for the 1945 San Francisco conference that created the United Nations.

Ros served on the executive committee of the UN's Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), twice – 19 years apart – as president where she organized international forums held in parallel with major UN conferences; as a board member and president of the International Social Service (ISS) (in the 1950s); and as a founder of the International Women's Tribune Center. Early in her career, she worked for the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the International Graphic Arts Society, and the American Labor Education Service. For over 25 years, until 2015, she was the administrator of the Kenworthy Swift Foundation that makes grants in support of children's mental health, and was ISS's representative to the UN, as well as a member of the Unitarian-Universalist Association's UN Advisory Committee and other international organizations involved with child welfare, crime and drug trafficking, and women's education and economic development.

Ros was celebrated and hosted by ISS-USA in Baltimore when we dedicated our Arthur C. Helton Institute, named in honor of ISS' former board chair, Arthur C. Helton, who died in the Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad, while there on a humanitarian mission.

I had the honor of visiting with Ros in New York City on at least one or two occasions and corresponding with her as well. Ros was the keeper of ISS history and was instrumental in shedding light on how Jane Russell was involved with ISS-USA back in the 1950's. Per Ros, " Bill Kirk (who was head both of ISS international and ISS-American Branch in the early 1950's) met Jane Russell after adopting her son. Jane wanted to start an agency to assist orphans in war-torn countries. Bill persuaded her that ISS could provide the professional service that she was interested in. In turn, Jane formed WAIF as a fundraising arm of ISS-USA. A representative of WAIF was on the ISS Board. Jane Russell maintained her interest in WAIF until eventually WAIF formed its own organization."

Thanks to Ros, we were able to track down Jane's grandson who attended ISS-USA's 90th anniversary celebration on the Hill on behalf of his father, the adopted son who inspired Jane's collaboration and support of ISS.

Over the years, I kept in touch with Ros, inviting her to the Council on Foreign Relations annual Arthur C. Helton lectures in New York where she lived. My last contact with her was an invitation to attend an event in honor of ISS-USA, hosted by former board member, Ambassador Muni Figueres, Ambassador of Costa Rica to the United States. Sadly, we lost touch prior to her moving to Maine to live near her daughter.

As ISS-USA quickly approaches our 100th anniversary in 2024, we pay homage and deep gratitude to Ros and to other dedicated women who brilliantly founded, led and remained involved with ISS these past 100 years. **Though the world has changed a great deal since 1924, our mission to serve and protect vulnerable children, adults and families separated by borders, has not.** Rest in peace Ros, thank you for the many ways you changed the world for cross border children and your dedication to ISS. You will be missed but not forgotten.

-Julie Rosicky, Executive Director

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## A PEAK INTO PUBLICATIONS BY OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### ISS-USA Board Member Co-authors International Family Law Textbook

In 2010, Melissa Kucinski started teaching the George Washington University School of Law's international family law course. Only four years out of law school at the time, Melissa was still learning the fundamentals of international family law herself. She pieced together a library of a few books, articles, and websites to help her stay one class ahead of her law students. Over the years, she started restructuring her class to include practical hands-on activities, like client counseling, dispute resolution, and legal drafting. She also started reconfiguring the material and how it was presented to the students, so they could envision an actual family and work with that hypothetical family through the semester as they learned the substantive law. When West Academic approached Melissa in late 2019, expressing an interest in publishing a coursebook for law students who want to learn international family law, Melissa already had the template in her head. This book is the culmination of over ten years of observing her law students and examining how they best solved these complex real-world problems by using legal frameworks. She teamed with Bruce Hale, an expert on international family formation and surrogacy, and Michael Coffee, an authority on private international law, treaties, and judicial assistance. Their complementary backgrounds have led to a comprehensive textbook on international family law that will allow law students and legal practitioners to envision the complex legal problems that cross-border families face when they are building or dissolving their family unit.

The book, titled *Family Law Across Borders*, is expected in print in July 2021 and will be published by West Academic.



Melissa Kucinski

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Read more about Melissa Kucinski on our [website](#).



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## A PEAK INTO PUBLICATIONS BY OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“With increased numbers of unaccompanied children arriving this spring, it becomes increasingly important to strengthen services in communities for children and their parents and sponsors.” -Mark Greenberg



Mark Greenberg

Mark Greenberg is a Senior Fellow and Director of Human Services Initiative at Migration Policy Institute. His work focuses on the intersections of migration policy with human services and social welfare policies.

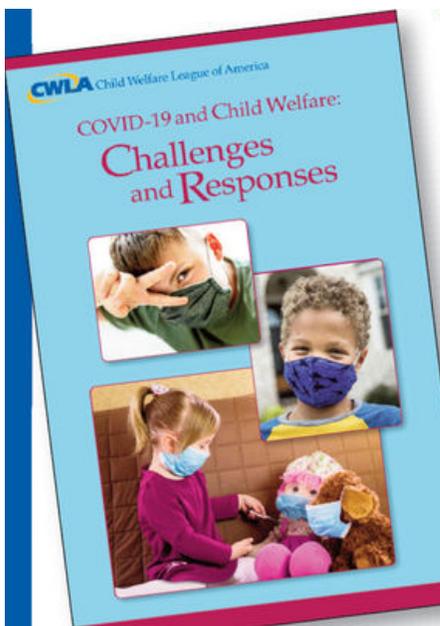
Read Mark Greenberg's most recent publications:

[Hampered by the Pandemic: Unaccompanied Child Arrivals Increase as Earlier Preparedness Shortfalls Limit the Response](#)

[U.S. Government Makes Significant Strides in Receiving Unaccompanied Children but Major Challenges Remain](#)

To learn more about Mark visit [Migration Policy Institute](#) or our [website](#).

## ELAINE WEISMAN’S ESSAYS ARE INCLUDED IN THE CWLA COLLECTION



Program and Training Manager Elaine Weisman presented at two Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) 2021 Virtual conference webinar events during the May 4-6 conference Lessons Learned from 2020: Reaching New Heights for Children and Families. On May 5th she participated in a roundtable discussion entitled “Transitioning to Virtual Strategies to Ensure Continued Service Delivery and Supports for Special Populations.” The panel featured four speakers discussing ways in which their agencies have adapted during COVID-19 to meet the needs of diverse client populations. Ms. Weisman spoke about ISS-USA’s work developing guidelines for remote assessments in permanency planning.

In a second webinar entitled COVID-19 And Child Welfare: Challenges and Responses – Services and Support – Special Populations, Ms. Weisman spoke alongside Dr. Kristina Lovato, Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work at the California State University, Long Beach. Their presentations discussed the ways in which Latinx immigrant and cross-border families have been affected by the pandemic and emerging strategies to ensure equitable access to services and family reunification. During the pandemic, ISS-USA made adjustments to service delivery programs in [Guatemala and Honduras](#) to support families in the reunification process despite widespread jobless, curfews and travel restrictions. Dr. Lovato and Ms. Weisman’s essays are included in the CWLA collection of essays entitled “Covid-19 and Child Welfare: Challenges and Responses” Available for purchase [here](#).

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## THE LETTER FROM ISS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE



Alan and Donna in the 60s



Alan, Donna, Daniel and Thomas (from left to right) present day

It was the 60s and things were rapidly changing. Justin\* and I met, and Alan was born shortly after. Justin and I were two kids from different countries and cultures who fell in love in Chicago. What could go wrong?

Our fairytale romance came to a halt. The relationship ended abruptly and resulted in a separation. The authorities said it was best for Alan to go with *his people*. There I was left with nothing but pain. No Justin... no Alan. There was no trace of them in the U.S. I went through years of therapy and heartache, wounds and scars scabbed over until they became numb. I waited in Chicago for what seemed like forever, but nothing. Over the years I would try to find them without luck. I checked Facebook and Ancestry when they became available to me, but again, nothing. I had a friend look for them in Justin's birthplace, Budapest, Hungary and yet again nothing.

Ten years later, I moved to Arizona for a new job. There, I met my current husband who I will be married to for 39 years this winter. I also had my second son, Daniel. Then one day I received a letter from ISS...my world changed! ISS-USA and ISS Hungary worked together to locate me in the U.S., contacted me about the family request and supported me as I began communication with my granddaughter and son for the first time in over 50 years. It turns out Alan's extended family had been searching for me as well. However, they were searching for me in Chicago, but I had already relocated to Arizona.

I speak to my son and his family daily. The internet has been our connector with the use of video chats and text messages, we have gotten to know each other as best as we can considering the pandemic. My son and I have similar interests, foods, and mannerisms, aside from the physical looks. All of these things are fun to explore. Soon we will be able to spend time together in person. My son is coming to visit me this month and his daughter and her two children are coming in August! My husband is very supportive and my younger son, Daniel is very excited to have a brother. I am so happy for this chapter in our lives. It just gets better as we are taking it one day at a time.

It has been almost a year since I have been in contact with Alan, my first son and his extended family. I am grateful for the extensive efforts of my granddaughter, ISS-USA and ISS Hungary because without them, this reunification would not have been possible. Thank you ISS for connecting me with my new family!

-Donna

*While many reunifications are joyful, ISS-USA recognizes the emotional impact of receiving tracing letters from previously unknown family members. ISS-USA and our international partners help protect privacy and facilitate communication until both parties feel ready to connect.*

*\*names and places and all identifying details have been completely sanitized to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the people served by ISS-USA and the people we work with*

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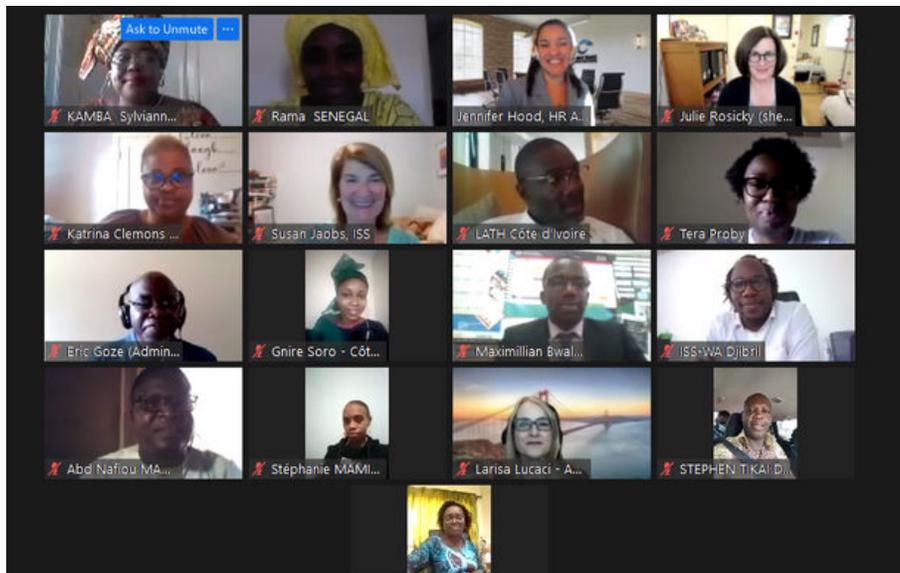
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## ISS-USA HOSTS WEST AFRICAN DELEGATION

On Wednesday June 9th, a delegation of West African child protection professionals met with the ISS-USA team. Meeting participants were invited as part of the International Visitor Leadership Program hosted by the U.S. Department of State with Meridian International Center serving as the meeting facilitator. Participants were from Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Togo, Madagascar, Zambia and Ghana. The conversation's theme was "Promoting Transparent and Ethical Intercountry Adoptions" and served as the group's foundation in discussing child protection efforts within the United States and in the West African region. Many of the participants worked in their respective Central Authorities for adoption, were social workers and/or professors in social work. Everyone was united in the desire to connect children to their families and to ensure their well-being.

ISS' Djibril Fall, Director of the ISS-West Africa network located in Dakar, Senegal also joined the discussion. His participation in the meeting was critical in showcasing how ISS operates as a network between countries and how the network could provide technical assistance, content expertise and training on key issues related to intercountry adoption, alternative care, and cross border child protection.

The participants were very interested in connecting with Djibril and the ISS network and many participants agreed that this conversation was just the beginning of future collaboration.



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## WELCOME NEW INTERNS



Jennifer Gillyard (above)

**Jennifer Gillyard** was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and has resided in Alexandria, Virginia since 2007. She attended the University of Virginia where she double majored in Government and Sociology. She graduated with her BA and went to graduate school at Columbia University where she studied U.S. Social Work and Policy with an International focus on families, youth and children. She also received a Masters of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary in 2014 and at times returns as a guest lecturer in World Religions. She's a social worker, chaplain and globe trotter.

Jennifer currently works for DC Child and Family Services in the Office of Planning, Policy and Program Support where she strives to promote better case management practices in serving children and families. She has served youth in the fields of foster care, juvenile justice, immigration, human rights and education. She volunteers as an Interfaith Chaplain at Alexandria INOVA Hospital. In her spare time, she enjoys writing poetry, spending time with family, volunteering internationally and teaching life skills to youth in detention and citizenship classes to legal permanent residents in Alexandria. Jennifer joins ISS-USA as an intern to strengthen her international lens of social work practice and research. She lives by the social work motto of "meet people where they are."



Felicia Odejide (above)

**Felicia Odejide** is from Nigeria, she came to the United States two years ago. She just graduated from the University of Baltimore, with a master's degree in Global Affairs and Human Security. Felicia was previously a community development fellow, and she chose to intern for ISS-USA. She wants to gain professional experience as well as build foundational skills that will enable her to excel in her field of international relations and affairs. In her free time, she loves to catch up with her friends and also go to the movies. She also enjoys cooking and baking. She is incredibly excited to work with ISS-USA and learn from so many incredible people.



Cheryl Grant-Johnson (above)

**Cheryl Grant-Johnson** is a senior at the University of Baltimore enrolled in the undergraduate Human Services Administration program. She recently retired from the State of Maryland after 37 years of service in October 2019. She has since gone back to school to get her degree while working full-time at the University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Medicine. After graduation, Cheryl is considering enrollment in a master's program for Human Services Administration and hopes to work with a community or nonprofit organization. Her area of interest is in grant writing, fundraising and case management. Cheryl is excited about her work with ISS-USA.

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## WELCOME NEW INTERNS



Esatou Cole (above)

**Esatou Cole** is currently attending the University of Baltimore seeking her undergraduate degree in the field of Psychology. She is also working for St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore as a Program Assistant in a homeless shelter providing services to citizens of Baltimore County. Esatou decided to intern for ISS-USA because she wants to make a difference in bringing families together from other parts of the world so they can create a better life for themselves. Even though Esatou is an American citizen, she comes from a family of immigrants from The Gambia and Senegal located in West Africa. She fully understands that the immigration process is indeed grueling and stressful for those who want to be reunited with their loved ones. She is grateful to join ISS-USA as the work adds more meaning and purpose in her life and she has an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. She is excited to grow personally, professionally and seek resolutions for families in complex situations. In addition, she is excited to work with a diverse team of colleagues and clients.



Hanako Walker (above)

**Hanako Walker** joins ISS-USA as a Development and Communications Intern for the Summer. Hanako is a rising senior at Georgetown Day School where she was a fellow at her school's "Life Resettled" Policy Institute. Participation in this fellowship has increased her curiosity and passion to learn about global displacement, immigration and resettlement issues. She hopes to continue to expand her knowledge in this area while collaborating with the Communications team and the broader organization. When not working at ISS-USA, Hanako spends time reading in the sun, biking and trying out new recipes in the kitchen.



Liliana Rosario (above)

**Liliana Rosario** joins the Development and Communications team as a Fund Development and Communications Intern. She completed her undergraduate program in Communication and Japanese at the University of Maryland in December of 2020. Previously, Liliana was a Communications Intern at the Hearing Loss Association of America, an Administrative Intern at Keio Academy – a school in New York and she has completed an English teaching internship in Japan. Liliana spends her free time taking long walks with her dogs, listening to music, or playing video games. Liliana's parents are from El Salvador and Puerto Rico, and she speaks both English and Spanish. She is looking forward to focusing on development/communications and making sure that the work she does goes back into the communities that are in dire need of support through ISS-USA.

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## Join Our Team!

### ISS-USA is seeking licensed social workers in Virginia!



Please submit the following to **Elaine Weisman**, Program and Training Manager, at [eweisman@iss-usa.org](mailto:eweisman@iss-usa.org):

- Updated resume
- Proof from your state licensing board that you are in good standing;
- Child Abuse Registry clearance for your state
- Proof of independent insurance;
- One writing sample in each language you speak.

Learn more about the position [here](#).

### ISS-USA is seeking a Repatriation Administrative Manager!



Review the full position description, qualifications, and responsibilities [here](#).

Please submit resume and writing sample to the ISS-USA Human Resources Department at [HR@ISS-USA.org](mailto:HR@ISS-USA.org)

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