

MEET THE 2023 COHORT



SUMMER PROGRAM ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEE STUDIES HARVARD UNIVERSITY & NKUA



FXB Center
for Health & Human Rights
at Harvard University



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
**National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens**
EST. 1837



Center for Hellenic
Studies in Greece
Harvard University



CENTER FOR
HELLENIC STUDIES
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Leah Anyanwu

Leah Anyanwu is a Program Specialist at the LEGO Foundation. In this capacity, she supports the Foundation's early childhood portfolio with a focus on children displaced due to conflict and climate. Leah holds a M.S. in Education from SUNY Binghamton and a Ed.M. in Human Development and Psychology from the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE). While at HGSE, Leah completed the Child Protection Certificate Program through The Harvard François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights; the Harvard Ministerial Student Research Fellowship; and the Harvard Dean's Education Fellowship. A passionate educator and advocate, she has over a decade of experience working in education with a focus on ECD and education systems. Leah began her career as an early childhood educator in the US before moving to Kenya where she helped scale quality education programs at various NGOs. Through this course, Leah plans to explore how communities, refugee-led organizations, funders, governments, and NGOs can improve efforts to support displaced children and their caregivers.



Jen Bacong

Jen Bacong is an MPA '23 student at Harvard Kennedy School. She is a Philippine-trained lawyer with extensive experience in public law litigation, legislation and policymaking, and human rights advocacy. She holds a JD from the University of the Philippines, and an LLM from the University of Melbourne. Prior to coming to Harvard, she served as chief of staff of a Member of the Philippine Senate. She also headed a nonprofit providing free legal services to indigent clients and indigenous peoples communities, and taught Public International Law and Human Rights Law in two law schools in Manila. Her research interests include the intersections of migration, women, and human rights.



Magdalena Bogucewicz

Magdalena Bogucewicz is a PhD candidate at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Her research is focused on the political and humanitarian aspects of migration crises, with a particular emphasis on the double standards of refugee reception in Poland between 2021-2023. Prior to pursuing an academic career, Magdalena worked in the private sector. However, volunteer work with migrants and refugees in Serbia in 2018 was a turning point that motivated her to redirect her trajectory and pursue an academic career. Since then, she has been actively involved in research and has published several papers on the topic of migration and refugee reception. Magdalena is committed to uncovering the underlying social and political factors that shape migration patterns and reception policies.



Sylvia Broude

Sylvia Broude (she/her) is a mid-career MPA student at the Harvard Kennedy School and Senior Advisor to [Slingshot](#), working alongside communities most impacted by environmental threats to build community power. She is a community organizer, facilitator, and strategist committed to building a multi-racial, cross-class movement for change. Before co-founding Slingshot in 2022, Sylvia spent 16 years leading Community Action Works, a Northeast U.S.-based non-profit that organizes with communities to confront polluters and seed solutions. She also has experience leading grassroots political campaigns at the state and federal level. She has called Boston home for 17 years, the past decade in Dorchester .



Ellen Burstein

Ellen is a 2023 graduate of Harvard College, where she studied Social Anthropology with a secondary field in Government and earned a language citation in French. Her academic coursework included classes in global health, humanitarian response, and the anthropology of migration. On campus, she was a leader at *The Harvard Crimson* and The Harvard Public Opinion Project, and has served as a civics and government teacher with the Institute of Politics. Her undergraduate thesis research explored community trust-building and COVID-19 vaccination efforts in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Next year, she will pursue a master's degree in Medical Anthropology at Balliol College, Oxford, and hopes to explore medical trust and health beliefs amongst migrants and refugees to the European Union.



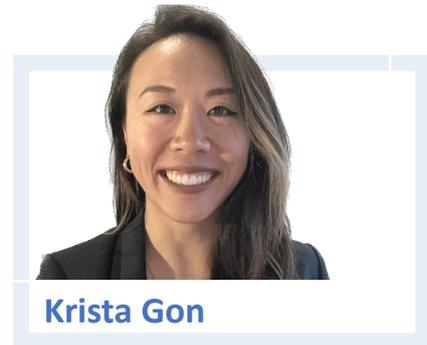
Stephanie Endo

Stephanie Endo graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara, with a BA in Environmental Studies, focusing on the developing world, and is pursuing an MPH at the George Washington University. She aims to come alongside displaced peoples and vulnerable populations to improve health using social and behavioral change communication (SBCC) tools. Along the way, she wants to extend her influence as a global health diplomat to promote peace and build relationships, helping people reach their highest attainable standard of well-being.



Elpiniki Gavouneli

Elpiniki is a fourth-year LL.B. student at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is co-founder of Athens Law School Model United Nations Society and an alumna of the European Law Students' Association (ELSA). She is Editor of the Law Review Applications of Public Law and Editor in charge of European Law of De Jure Journal. Elpiniki's research interests focus on the challenges and opportunities for the EU such as migration, climate change and the rule of law. She is currently participating in the Human Rights Moot Court Competition organized by ELSA Queen Mary University of London and ELSA Athens. During her studies, she has conducted research for the Our Rule of Law Academy under Professors A. Alemanno (HEC Paris) and J. Krommendijk (Radboud University) and for the Trade Law Clinic coordinated by Athens Public International Law Center (AthensPIL).



Krista Gon

Krista Gon is the VP of Community Development at bosWell and a public health expert with a strong commitment to improving health outcomes and systems in vulnerable communities. She is currently a Master of Public Health in Health Management and Humanitarian Studies Concentration candidate from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and has gained invaluable experience through various positions in health management and public policy roles at both the state and municipal level. Her accomplishments include leading a program that designed and developed a \$56 million behavioral health and workforce training initiative, designing the first integrated performance dashboard for MassHealth's ACOs, and managing the Commonwealth's \$16B healthcare budget. Her leadership and volunteer experience include serving as a member of the Board of Directors for the Asian American Women's Political Initiative and as a Teaching Assistant for a Public Health Seminar at BU School of Public Health.



Rhea Goyal

Rhea Goyal, is an Indian-qualified lawyer, having three years of work experience in litigation, human and refugee rights. She is also a graduate of the LL.M in International Law from the Geneva Graduate Institute where she specialised in the stream 'protection of the individual'. Having particular interest in International Law, and Refugee rights, she aspires to work towards strengthening protection efforts for forcibly displaced persons and providing durable solutions to displacement issues. Recently, she has worked with UNHCR, Geneva on livelihoods and economic inclusion initiatives to ensure the self-reliance and economic inclusion of refugees in host countries.



Nour Hammad

Nour is a Palestinian from Lebanon. She is a first year PhD student in Population Health Sciences, with a specialization in Public Health Nutrition, and a concentration in Public Health Leadership at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She earned a Master of Science in Global Health from Duke University, where she received the Madeline Boccuzzi Outstanding Graduate Student Award in Global Health. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics - Coordinated Program from the American University of Beirut, where she received the Penrose award. She is a U.S. registered dietitian nutritionist. She enjoys walking, trying a variety of cuisines, traveling, and watching movies/shows.



Fridoon Joinda

I'm a speaker, UN award-winning filmmaker, founder, and director of Joinda Production, a video production entity focused on questions of social justice. I grew up in Kabul, Afghanistan, and was forced to flee in 2016 due to my previous media work. My story begins in Moria camp: leading me to become a human rights advocate. Through my films and speeches, I aim to inspire integration, change negative perceptions of refugees, promote refugee rights, and influence citizens and EU policy-makers. As a refugee rights advocate, I actively seek opportunities for learning and knowledge advancement. I strongly believe that education is crucial for the success of refugees, and my goal is to promote accessible higher education for them. To achieve this, I recognize the significance of educating myself first. Participating in the "Refugee and Migration Studies" program will not only expand my knowledge but also enable me to amplify the voices of other refugees who lack integration and education opportunities, particularly those in camps. Graduating with a bachelor's degree in communications and journalism this year, this program will also help me determine whether to continue with a master's degree in this field."



Laila Khondkar

Laila Khondkar has two decades of experience in international development. As a practitioner and researcher, she has contributed to Child Protection, Child Rights Governance, Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS sectors. Laila has worked with Save the Children in various technical, management and leadership positions in Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Liberia, Australia and England. In addition to working with CARE on Program Quality, she offered consultancy support to several national and international organizations. Laila has conducted research on public health issues at Centre for International Development (Harvard University), Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies (South Africa), and Institute of Population and Social Research (Mahidol University, Thailand). Laila designed and implemented programs in development and humanitarian settings, managed teams, mobilized resources, and facilitated advocacy at national and global levels. She worked with some of the most marginalized groups including sex workers and their children, drug users, people affected with HIV/AIDS, refugee children and families.



Carol León

Carol León is a Mid-Career Master's in Public Administration student and Rappaport Institute Urban Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS). Before starting her Master's, she served as the Programs Manager at the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA); Carol oversaw MOIA's programs and led community outreach and engagement initiatives. In 2020 Carol developed Immigrants Lead Boston, a new civic engagement program for emerging immigrant leaders. Prior to this role, Carol served as MOIA's Outreach and Community Engagement Coordinator and led Citizenship Day, community legal clinics, and a 2016 conversation series between immigrant communities and City leaders. She first joined MOIA in 2015 as the AmeriCorps VISTA and launched Immigrant Information Corners at all 24 branches of the Boston Public Library. Carol is a native Spanish speaker and is proficient in French. She graduated from Suffolk University with a Bachelor's in International Affairs and French. Inspired by her family's journey from Mexico, Carol aspires to continue serving and advocating for immigrant and refugee communities upon graduating from HKS.



Caleb MacDonald

Caleb MacDonald served as an officer with the Canadian Military for 20 years, including several tours to conflict zones. During this time, he saw firsthand the effects military intervention had on the civilian populace. Determined to use these experiences in a positive manner, Caleb spent a year working with the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security, training security sector personnel on preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers. While abroad with the Institute in East Africa, Caleb determined that a law degree would be the most beneficial way to help refugees fleeing conflict or disaster. He enrolled at the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University to pursue a career in Public International Law. Caleb lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with his incredible wife, Jess, and their two busy boys, Judah and Eli.



Deborah Meiowitz

Deborah Meiowitz (she/her) is a New York native that recently earned her Master of Public Affairs from Brown University in May of 2023. She graduated magna cum laude with honors in International and Public Affairs (IAPA) from Brown in May 2022, majoring in IAPA and Theatre Arts. While at Brown, she conducted Indigenous studies research, publishing articles on Native jurisdiction in US Constitutional law as it pertains to the epidemic of sexual violence against women, in addition to conflict studies and Middle Eastern studies research, authoring an honors thesis about binational solidarity and arguments of Indigeneity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During her Master's program, Deborah served as a research assistant for Dr. Wendy Schiller and Dr. Kaitlin Sidorsky, focusing on issues of domestic violence jurisdiction in Native communities, authored a capstone entitled International Law and the 'Right of Return' in Israel/Palestine: Self-Determination and Reconciliation Between Competing Diasporic National Identities in Professor Jacqueline Bhabha's Migration, Refugees, and Human Rights law course, and interned at Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha's office. She has experience interning in several policy-oriented institutions, exploring her dedication to migrant and refugee rights while helping obtain Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Afghan refugees in the summer of 2021.



Aqil Merchant

I'm Aqil Merchant, a student at Harvard College studying Social Anthropology with a minor in Global Health & Health Policy. Long-term, I hope to serve as a physician-policymaker in humanitarian settings, especially for displaced populations facing conflicts and in refugee camps. My interest in serving such individuals stems from my experience working with refugee families in Clarkston, Georgia, as part of a program I launched while at high school. At Harvard, I have gained a particular appreciation for ethnography and other anthropological methods which lend community-based perspectives on social determinants of health afflicting marginalized individuals. I also recently interned at Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, where I presented strategies for partnerships with income-diverse firms and further engaged in patient-centered design to advance policymaking. I am eager to immerse myself in opportunities that reveal the biopsychosocial realities of displacement, which will continuously shape how I approach advocacy as an aspiring physician-policymaker.



Leslie Nguyen-Okwu

Leslie Nguyen-Okwu is the author of the forthcoming memoir “American Hyphen” about balancing on the tightrope between Black America and Asian America as a first-generation Vietnamese Nigerian American. The award-winning journalist and professional storyteller has worked with major media outlets and the world's biggest companies, including *The New York Times*, *BBC*, *National Geographic*, *The Economist*, *Harper's Bazaar*, Airbnb, Google, and HTC. As the proud daughter of refugees, Leslie focuses on borders and migration, racial equity and social justice, and decision-making in diplomacy and foreign policy. Fluent in Mandarin, she is also an active member of the Black China Caucus and the National Association for Black Engagement with Asia. Previously, she worked as a technology reporter in Silicon Valley and as a foreign correspondent in Asia. She holds a Bachelor's in International Relations from Stanford University and is currently pursuing a Master's in Public Policy at Harvard University. She recently completed a six-month battle with cancer and is now officially in remission.



Kunoor Ojha

Kunoor Ojha is a mid-career student at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Before her studies, she was Chief of Staff for the Green New Deal Network - a coalition of progressive groups, environmental justice organizations, racial justice leaders, and labor unions, working to pass legislation to ensure green jobs, justice, and a livable planet. Previously, Kunoor served as the States Organizing Director for the Elizabeth Warren campaign, where she oversaw in-state direct voter contact and community organizing programs, and grassroots leadership development in all 50 states. She's also worked for the National Domestic Workers Alliance, Indivisible, Bernie 2016, and Hillary for America. She is originally from Illinois but has worked all over the United States, building power with volunteers and organizers.



Kaylee Paul

Kaylee is a recent Harvard Divinity School (MTS 2021) and Dartmouth College (A.B. 2019) graduate from Riverside, CA. At Dartmouth College, she majored in Hispanic Studies, minored in Religion, and was primarily interested in examining in-group and out-group formation through a multidisciplinary lens. At Harvard Divinity School, she focused on the intersections of media, policy, and belief, and completed coursework to learn how to communicate effectively across worldviews. As part of an interdisciplinary program, she was able to take courses through the Harvard Kennedy School and Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Kaylee greatly enjoys learning about other languages and cultures, and has studied German and Japanese in addition to Spanish. In the fall, she is planning to pursue a second Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS) to pursue a career in academic/research librarianship. She hopes to shape academic libraries into more inclusive spaces with resources tailored to both university and local communities, help patrons access accurate information in an oversaturated environment full of misinformation and disinformation, and use libraries as platforms to increase the visibility of marginalized voices and issues.



Maria Rousta

My name is Maria Rousta and I am from Rhodes- Greece. I study Law with the ambition to help, with my legal knowledge, those who are not in a position to defend themselves and claim their rights.



Derek Sipperly

Derek Sipperly is an active-duty Army officer in the United States military with over 11 years of experience leading infantry formations. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science in systems engineering. Following his commission, he served in assignments at the 101st Airborne Division, 10th Mountain Division, and, most recently, the 75th Ranger Regiment. These assignments led to several combat deployments to Afghanistan, and two deployments to the continent of Africa – Mogadishu, Somalia, and Accra, Ghana. Derek is currently enrolled at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government as a Master in Public Policy candidate. He is also a General Wayne A. Downing Scholar with the Combating Terrorism Center at the United States Military Academy. Upon completion of his degree, Derek will return to the operational Army to continue to help solve complex national security problems.



Catherine Stevens

Catherine Stevens is a Ph.D. student in Criminology and Criminal Justice with Terrorism studies at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, USA. She holds a BSc and MSc in Psychology and Investigative and Forensic Psychology respectively from the University of Liverpool, UK. The core of her research centers around human security and critical incident decision-making, predominately within the contexts of emergency management and warfare. Catherine's particular interests lie in exploring the threats to asylum seekers, refugees, and displaced individuals' political, community, and personal security. Her interest in this area is driven by her extensive community integration efforts and ongoing (six-plus) years of volunteering experience empowering and mentoring refugees, asylum seekers, domestic abuse, and HIV/AIDS survivors. Catherine's passion to travel, learn, celebrate, and advocate for those she meets compliments her human-centered research approach which focuses on cultivating individual well-being, empowerment, and agency.



Julia Tankink

Julia Tankink (she/her) is a medical doctor and clinical researcher from the Netherlands, who is dedicated to addressing health inequities in the context of forced migration. Her commitment to this cause was ignited during a university exchange program in Thessaloniki, Greece, where she was inspired to explore the intersections of health, human rights and migration. After completing her medical studies, Julia returned to Greece to work with various non-governmental organizations, providing medical and psychosocial support to displaced persons. In 2020, she began her PhD research, which focuses on birth care for asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Through her research, Julia seeks to shed light on maternal and newborn health of refugees and the impact of migration policies and suboptimal care, as well as the challenges faced by displaced persons during childbirth and resettlement. In addition to her academic pursuits, Julia has worked in a medical team providing care to displaced Ukrainians. Currently, she works at an abortion clinic in Amsterdam, providing services free of charge to undocumented migrants.



Kanwal Tanveer

Kanwal Tanveer is an Ed.M candidate in the Education Policy & Analysis program at Harvard Graduate School of Education. She has eight years of experience working in the educational development sector of Pakistan within the disciplines of teaching, instructional design and leadership development. She is also currently enrolled in Child Protection Certificate program hosted by Harvard T.H Chan School. Her work in Pakistan involved building an understanding of the plight of Afghan refugees as well as Internally Displaced Persons within the country. E: kanwaltanveer@gse.harvard.edu



Sima Thakkar

Sima Thakkar is a graduate student pursuing her Master in Public Administration at Harvard Kennedy School. With a diverse background in online education, content development, content strategy, copywriting, press release writing, and documentary filmmaking, Sima has made a significant impact in the nonprofit sector, working with several global NGOs, including refugee rights organizations. Sima's passion for storytelling and social justice led her to launch her own successful blog and YouTube channel, "Good Indian Girl," which explores the complexities of the diasporic Indian community. Her work has garnered significant attention and has been featured on Refinery29, TVAsia, and YourStory. In addition to her professional accomplishments, Sima also holds a Bachelor's Degree from Indiana University, where she honed her skills and developed a passion for community building and activism. With a tireless work ethic, boundless creativity, and unwavering commitment to social justice, Sima is committed to being a voice for change personally, academically, and professionally.



Rocío Rivero Velarde

Lawyer from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile), Master in International Migration from Universidad Pontificia de Comillas (Spain), and Master in International Relations from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. She is the author of several works on migration and refugee law, as well as international relations, covering European regulation on refugee matters, forced migration across the Mediterranean Sea, as well as forced migration in foreign policy, among others. She currently lives in Dublin, where she works at Trinity College Dublin School of Law, while she also works as a migration lawyer at the Legal Clinic of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso School of Law.



Kathryn Whelan

Kathryn Whelan is currently pursuing an M.A. in social work at Columbia University. She is a grants consultant for DC Central Kitchen, Washington, D.C., where previously she was employed as grants coordinator responsible for providing stewardship to a vast portfolio of institutional donors. Through her M.A. program she is an intern with Coalition for the Homeless, New York City, where she leads social services workshops and provides case management to unhoused and low-income women. Other work experience includes United Way Worldwide (Alexandria, VA), CAMBA, Inc. (Brooklyn, NY), and Interfaith Works Center for New Americans and Refugee Resettlement (Syracuse, NY). She holds a B.A. in sociology from American University. Originally from Syracuse, NY, she currently lives in New York City.