



# OPEN DOORS

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## Useful Links

[Review](#) and update your profile or renew your membership

[View](#) the calendar of upcoming US Servas related events

[Access](#) worldwide Servas Members to plan your travels

[Volunteer](#) to share your talents and time in supporting Servas

[Read](#) contributions from younger members of Servas

[Contact](#) the Peace Secretary

[Suggestions](#) for the Newsletter, or for US Servas, are appreciated.

## Articles Welcome

US Servas Members would love to read about YOUR travels, experiences, and your community endeavors that promote Peace and Social Justice. We are also looking for your advice -- traveler and host tips. Please submit your contribution [HERE](#).



## What Does Peace & Justice Mean?

by Deirdre Marlowe

US Servas and Servas International both have a Peace & Justice Secretary. Both organizations share mission statements: *Peace and understanding through travel and hosting*. Servas is not an advocacy organization, so what do Peace and Peace & Justice mean?

In this context, Peace & Justice refer to efforts that “encourage individual and collective action by citizens as actors in society for the promotion of peace and justice in the world. It seeks to strengthen citizen responsibility both locally and globally.”

When we invite people from elsewhere into our homes, and vice versa, we learn about others – we represent our country, and they theirs. Few traveler or host experiences are negative, and even when they are, we reason that not everybody from, for example, France, can be like that so it’s a win for peace and understanding.

There are many ways to work for peace and not all of them involve directly protesting or fighting war. It becomes more complicated when you are put in the position of deciding whether or not something is a “good” war, e.g., World War II. You are working for peace if you actively support any of the seventeen UN Sustainable Development Goals. And so, by definition, Servas hosts and travelers are all working for peace and justice.



*Last Peaceable Kingdom* - Edward Hicks, 1849

## New International Peace Secretary a Truly Multicultural Man of the World

Translated by Yosi McIntire

I applied – and was selected – for the International Peace Secretary position. I will serve for three years in this capacity together with Mei Wang from Taiwan.

I was born in Mexico in 1980. My origins are a mixture of European, Asian, Middle Eastern and indigenous Mesoamerican. I was offered a scholarship to study in China and joined Servas in 2004. A neighbor’s daughter, who had taken a trip to Europe using Servas contacts, recommended this organization to me. During my stop-

over in Seoul, South Korea, I sought Servas hospitality. It turned out to be an extraordinary experience! I was treated as if I were a family member or a lifelong family friend.

When I returned home from China, I wanted to offer that same hospitality to Servas travelers visiting Mexico. I contacted Servas to express my interest in participating more actively as a volunteer. I became an assistant to Lilli Kerekes, the Mexican Youth coordinator. In due course I took over as



Francisco Salomon Luna

Youth coordinator. In 2010, I participated in the first International Youth Meeting held in Mexico. After that, I became the Servas Mexico Peace Secretary as well as coordinator of Mexico City. In 2017 and again in 2020, I was elected Servas Mexico National Secretary. Throughout the Covid pandemic, in addition to being a host and traveler, I participated in Servas meetings in Kyrgistan, Costa Rica, Spain, Korea and India. I also engaged in the SYLE program in Brazil and Making Connections in Israel.

While at the recent 2022 SICOGA meeting in India, I applied – and was selected – for the International Peace Secretary position. I will serve for three years in this capacity together with Mei Wang from Taiwan. As International Peace Secretary, I intend to maintain communication with other National Peace Secretaries to try to promote activities and events that promote Servas and that connect Servas to other organizations that have the similar objectives.

I believe that small actions can have significant im-

pact. Everything counts in the promotion of peace. The virtue of selfless “hosting of the pilgrim” appears in all the religions, cultures and philosophies of the world. Welcoming strangers into our homes, generates a positive energy that raises our consciousness and broadens our understanding. As ambassadors of our respective cultures of origin, the interaction between host and traveler convinces us that even if in many ways we are different and may have different view-points, we can be good friends. This is something of great value when we consider the human actions that sustain the world

## East Asia Conference Goes Global

by Deirdre Marlowe

On January 14, of this year, 126 people from around the world participated in a Servas East Asia Zoom and Live YouTube conference. Some of us even woke up at 2:30 in the morning on the biggest football weekend of the year!

We learned how to greet one another in the languages of two dozen countries and about the natural wonders of Hong Kong. Who knew that you could scuba dive within a few miles of Kowloon and go climbing in a rocky wilderness less than an hour from the hustle and bustle of downtown Hong Kong!? We broke into small groups for conversation, and as always happens with Servas learned that we shared more in common than our differences. It was a great opportunity to meet and begin to



Screen shot of East Asia Conference - Say Hello



know members in places that so far only exist on my bucket list. Thank you, Mei Wang, Taiwan, newly elected Servas International Co-Peace Secretary, and others for setting this up.



## News From the Board

by Richard Weaver, Chair

Happy New Year from the Board of US Servas. The Board has started out the year with a flurry of activity. First, we welcomed our new Board Members: Eileen Rowley, Shelley Mitchell, Tys Sniffen, and Bill Margargal. It is great to have these new members with their fresh ideas and energy. Yosi McIntire was confirmed as Peace Secretary for 2023.

We had a productive all-day, virtual strategic planning meeting. A key outcome of the meeting was agreement on goals for the year:

- Create simpler systems for members.
- Grow and retain membership.
- Recruit more volunteers and provide meaningful opportunities.
- Keep in mind that we are a peace organization.
- Foster collaboration and fun.

Throughout the year, the Board will be guided by these goals and measuring our performance on how we are doing towards them.

The first order of business at the January Board Meeting was the election of officers. Richard Weaver was elected Chair; Shyla Esko Bare, Vice Chair; Leena Desai, Treasurer; and Joanne Ferguson Cavanaugh, Secretary. This is a team of experienced Board Members already leading Servas forward. I



Clockwise from top left: Shyla Esko Bare, Leena Desai, Shelly Mitchell, Joanne Ferguson Cavanaugh, Lee Rowley, Yosi McIntire



a few of the 126 conference attendees

want to take a moment to express our appreciation for the contributions Arnie Roland made during the past year as Board Chair. He provided steady leadership and initiated a number of system changes that made Servas more efficient and effective. Thank you, Arnie.

US Servas has now operated for two years as a completely volunteer organization. This has been a huge learning experience. In early 2022 US Servas was reorganized into five branches: Governance, Membership, Community, Finance, and Technology. Each of these branches has teams fulfilling the associated functions. This means that when you apply to become a member or have a question, volunteers are stepping up and responding. In practical terms, this also means that there are many volunteer opportunities for Servas members to make a real difference.

If you enjoy sharing with people who have similar interests and values, you are invited to be a part of this. See more about volunteering [Here](#).

## Civil Rights in 1964 - St. Augustine, FL

by Yosi McIntire

In the Spring of 1964, the Ancient City would witness a final scene of what would be called “The Great Moral Drama,” which led to the landmark passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While St. Augustine was gearing up for its 400th anniversary, tensions rose as racial segregation came to the forefront and began to make headlines.

National media covered stories of the Ku Klux Klan attacking non-violent activists who were not only beaten but also subsequently arrested by local law enforcement. Terror reigned. Black homes were shot up and firebombed.



St. Augustine beach - Wade-in results in 45 Injuries

At the request of local activists, members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) - headed up by Dr. King - arrived on May 18, 1964, and began working with locals to organize sit-ins and peaceful protests and lead the charge to end segregation. On June 12, 1964, Dr. King was arrested on the steps of the Monson Motor Lodge when he asked to be served at the whites-only hotel restaurant. He was taken to the Old St. Johns County Jail where he wrote to Rabbi Israel Dresner of New Jersey, encouraging rabbis to assist in the St. Augustine movement.

On June 18th, two crucial moments in Civil Rights history would unfold at the hotel. After the refusal of service in the Monson Motor Lodge restaurant, sixteen rabbis prayed at the hotel’s entrance. Manager James Brock reportedly pushed the kneeling rabbis

toward police to be arrested for trespassing, breach of peace, and conspiracy. This resulted in the largest mass arrest of rabbis in US history to this day.

Several minutes later, Brock pouring two gallons of muriatic acid into the pool. The image of horrified swimmers would make global headlines, influencing lawmakers to vote in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. On June 17, “wade-ins” began on local beaches.

While Florida beaches were legally desegregated, St. Augustine’s public beaches were still mostly off-limits to Blacks. One of the largest and most violent demonstrations took place on June 25, 1964 at St. Augustine Beach.

The Miami News reported hundreds of white segregationists “screaming and flailing” at African Americans in the “city’s worst outbreak of racial violence.” White residents forced many of the demonstrators into the water. Police officers stormed the water: some with dogs, others wielding batons. At least 45 injuries and 15 hospitalizations were reported with some nearly drowned.

Wade-in protests continued until July 1, 1964, the day before President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law on July 2, 1964. Martin Luther King taught us that compassion is a tool that can influence and inspire us to grow a culture of Peace.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. & Rev. Abernathy after release

Monday, January 16 is Martin Luther King Day, a National Day of Service. I would like to learn what other US Servas members are doing to celebrate his legacy. Submit your story.



## An Ode to SICOGA 2022

by Radha Radhakrishna, SI President

The Servas International Conference and General Assembly (SICOGA) was held at the Asia Plateau campus, Panchgani, India, a 68-acre property nestled in a regenerated forest, in the shadow of a flat tabletop mountain. It provided a wonderful venue for the Servas International Conference and General Assembly (SICOGA).



Asia Plateau campus, Panchgani, India

The opening ceremony, with Indian-style celebrations and dances, heralded a triumphantly successful meeting where more than 130 members from 39 countries participated. During the meeting there were animated discussions on climate change, promoting peace during armed conflict, the status of women, and traveling as a way of reducing prejudices. We agreed that peace among humans requires us to take care of our planet.

We went on many nature walks, much needed to work off all the weight we gained from the wonderful meals served during the conference. We even “talked shop” - speaking, for example, about Version 2 of Servas.org.

The best part of SICOGA 2022 were the intangibles that everyone experienced: the camaraderie, the cultural fusion, and the wonderful Indian hospitality that we enjoyed. The outstanding energy it generated when we do things together was also a high point. It showcased what Servas does best. SICOGA 2022 will stay in our hearts for a very long time.



## Servas International Newsletter

The Winter issue of the Servas International newsletter is packed with information about the November SICOGA conference, including great photos. It also includes results of the Board elections. Our very own Radha Radhakrishna is now the president of Servas International.



Read the latest issue click [HERE](#).

Read other issues of the newsletter or other news and SICOGA bulletins [HERE](#).

## Parting Shots



Signs of the Times