



AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER NEWSLETTER U.S. EMBASSY HELSINKI

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AMERICAN AFTERNOON AT THE THINK CORNER



The American Resource Center (ARC) will move in summer 2012 to the new University City Centre Campus Library (Kaisa Library). The library days under a theme “Oasis of Science” at the Think Corner of the University of Helsinki provided a great opportunity to showcase the rich program and resources of the ARC.

The study opportunities and grant programs in the U.S. were presented by Karoliina Kokko from the Fulbright Center. There were also a few alumni sharing their experiences at the American universities.

Vietnamese American author Monique Truong discussed her books and did also a brief reading on her latest book. Both

“Bitter in the Mouth” and “The Book of Salt” will be shortly available at the ARC.

McDonnell-Douglas – Professor Markku Henriksson gave a presentation on American artist Georgia O’Keeffe and introduced the most important themes in O’Keeffe’s art. Chief Curator Erja Pusa from the Helsinki Art Museum briefly introduced the forthcoming Georgia O’Keeffe exhibition to be opened in early June.

Ms. Cody Douglas Oreck continued the theme telling about her recent trip to Taos, New Mexico where both Georgia O’Keeffe and Akseli Gallen-Kallela had lived and worked.

Ms. Oreck also told the audience about

her recent “road trip” to Taos, where she had an opportunity to visit the cottage where Akseli Gallen-Kallela had lived. Ms. Oreck also talked about Georgia O’Keeffe, the iconic female painter, who lived and worked at Taos and immortalized the impressive landscape of the Southwestern United States.

Ms. Cody Oreck’s blog post of the trip to Southwestern United States and Taos is available at the DipBlog (<http://www.usembassy.fi/blog/?p=877>).

Researcher Charly Salenius-Pasternak talked about the U.S. presidential elections 2012 and themes that are significant for American voters. The other panelists Tuomas Koskenniemi and Paula Siltanen presented some internal and foreign policy matters that may define the fall elections.

The presentation on energy resources and efficiency by Deputy Chief of Mission Danny Hall finalized a busy and engaging program.

The American Resource Center warmly thanks all presenters, audiences and the Think Corner staff!

More photos from the Think Corner can be seen in ARC’s Facebook.

The presentations from the afternoon can be watched via University of Helsinki’s ThinkWall.



American Afternoon at the Think Corner at Aleksis

WEB PICKS

Disclaimer: The views expressed on these websites are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect U.S. Government policies. These links are being provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only; they do not constitute an endorsement or approval by the ARC or the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki, nor can we bear any responsibility for the accuracy, legality, functionality or content of the external site or for that of subsequent links.

American Life

Get Rich U. by Ken Auletta. The New Yorker, April 30, 2012.
There are no walls between Stanford and Silicon Valley. Should there be?
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/04/30/120430fa_fact_auletta

Niall Ferguson on Henry Kissinger Coming Home to Harvard by Niall Ferguson. Newsweek Magazine, April 16, 2012.
Kissinger returns to Harvard—and America turns a corner. A successful college graduate is, as a general rule, loved by his alma mater. The more prominent he becomes, the more phone calls he receives. If he really makes the big time, there are invitations to host grand dinners, receive honorary degrees, give commencement addresses ... and of course, bestow his name on this or that chair or building (as well as on a very large check).
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/04/15/niall-ferguson-on-henry-kissinger-coming-home-to-harvard.html>

In the Political Heartland by Joseph Lelyveld. The New York Review of Books, April 26, 2012.
The Almanac of American Politics 2012 by Michael Barone and Chuck McCutcheon.
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/apr/26/heartland/>

Roth v. Roth v. Roth by Joseph O'Neill. The Atlantic, April 2012.
The complexities and conundrums of reading Philip Roth's work as autobiography.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/04/roth-v-roth-v-roth/8919/>

The Stanford Education Experiment Could Change Higher Learning Forever by Steven Leckart. Wired, April 2012.
Two university professors let the public take their artificial intelligence course online, for free. Then 160,000 students signed up. Now the plan is to change higher learning forever.
http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2012/03/ff_aiclass/all/1

Economy and Politics

America's Secret Growth Weapon: Why Immigration Really, Really Matters by Derek Thompson. The Atlantic, April 24, 2012.
The United States, like almost every other rich country in the world, is getting older and slower. But we have a natural advantage over the rest of the world, if only we're wise enough to use it.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/04/americas-secret-growth-weapon-why-immigration-really-really-matters/256294/>

Facebook's Seasonal Slowdown: Explanation or Excuse? by Jeff Berkovici. Forbes, April 24, 2012.
Should Facebook investors (and would-be investors) be nervous that the social networking behemoth just posted its first quarter-to-quarter revenue decline in at least two years, just weeks in advance of its expected \$100 billion IPO?
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffberkovi/2012/04/25/facebooks-seasonal-slowdown-explanation-or-excuse/>

Occupy the Media—and the Message by Astra Taylor. The Nation, March 14, 2012.
"Transparency has served the movement well, but some argue it's time to be more strategic".
<http://www.thenation.com/article/166818/occupy-media-and-message>

Global Challenges

China Digs It: How Beijing Cornered the Rare Earths Market by Damien Ma. Foreign Affairs, April 25, 2011.
In the last few decades, China has become the world's top producer of rare earths, a group of elements key to manufacturing high-tech products. Now Beijing has started to institute price controls and export quotas to drive up prices, but that plan will likely backfire.
<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137602/damien-ma/china-digs-it>

The Qatar Bubble: Can this tiny, rich emirate really solve the Middle East's thorniest political conflicts? by Blake Hounshell. Foreign Policy, May/June 2012.
Sultan Al Qassemi, the Emirati commentator and prolific tweeter, jokes that he tries to post one article every day on the rise of Qatar, the tiny Gulf sheikhdom at the heart of the Arab Spring. There's a formula, he says. Nearly all articles express the same points: Qatar is rich, small, hosting the 2022 soccer World Cup, underwriting the pan-Arab satellite channel Al Jazeera, and cheering on protesters across the Arab world -- yet it's hardly democratic at home.
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/04/23/the_qatar_bubble

What Sex Means for World Peace: The best predictor of a state's stability is how its women are treated by Valerie M. Hudson. Foreign Policy, April 24, 2012.

In the academic field of security studies, realpolitik dominates. Those who adhere to this worldview are committed to accepting empirical evidence when it is placed before their eyes, to see the world as it “really” is and not as it ideally should be. As Walter Lippmann wrote, “We must not substitute for the world as it is an imaginary world.”

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/04/24/what_sex_means_for_world_peace

International Relations

Conventional Arms Control in Europe: Is There a Last Chance? by Wolfgang Zellner. Arms Control Today, March 2012. European security policy currently is characterized by a striking contradiction between declarations and deeds. The November 2010 NATO Strategic Concept says the alliance is striving for “true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia”; in the Astana Commemorative Declaration, the 56 member states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) even commit themselves to the “vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok.”

http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2012_03/Conventional_Arms_Control_in_Europe_Is_There_a_Last_Chance

The Hunt for Kony by Scott Johnson. Newsweek Magazine, April 16, 2012.

The leader of the Lord's Resistance Army has killed thousands of African citizens in the name of Christianity. Scott Johnson goes on the chase for Africa's most notorious killer. Maj. Richard Kidega threaded his way through a thicket of sweet black trees and thorny underbrush when suddenly he drew to a halt. A young Ugandan soldier in front had raised a clenched fist: the sign to stop. With their AK-47s raised, Kidega and his men silently scanned the jungle for any signs of the enemy, such as fresh tracks or trampled brush. Hanging vines clogged the path. Dry leaves masked deep holes. The gully was an attractive place for an ambush. “It's places just like this where the LRA likes to hide,” Kidega whispered, as the hunt for Joseph Kony, rebel leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, slowly moved ahead.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/04/15/the-hunt-for-kony.html>

Elections 2012 Special

An American Gospel by Kevin D. Williamson. National Review, April 2, 2012.

Mitt Romney, the Mormons, and those who hate them.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/295305/american-gospel-kevin-d-williamson>

Can You Be Honest With Me? by John Dickerson. Slate, April 25, 2012.

Is either Barack Obama or Mitt Romney capable of telling American voters some hard truths?

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2012/04/when_have_obama_and_romney_spoken_candidly_to_american_voters_.html

Have President Obama's Re-Election Prospects Brightened? by Charles E. Cook, Jr. The Washington Quarterly, Spring 2012.

Have the 2012 elections reached an inflection point? It's far too soon to say that the trajectory of this election has changed directions, but we are beginning to see enough indicators to suggest that the presidential race may have shifted from uphill for President Obama to something more likely to be a very close fight and a more evenly-balanced contest. Simply put, the political environment for Republicans is not quite as favorable as it appeared three or four months ago.

<https://csis.org/files/publication/twq12springcook.pdf>

The Last Best Chance for Campaign Finance Reform: Americans Elect by Lawrence Lessig. The Atlantic, April 25, 2012.

The corrupting influence of money in politics is the most serious issue the country currently faces. Should we continue to allow a handful of people to control the fate of our elections?

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/04/the-last-best-chance-for-campaign-finance-reform-americans-elect/256361/>

As Small a President as He Can Be by Rich Lowry. Time Magazine, May 07, 2012.

Woodrow Wilson once said the President “is at liberty, both in law and conscience, to be as big a man as he can.” In his re-election bid, President Obama is determined to be as small as he can be.

He's gone from vaporous uplift in 2008 to dreary minutiae in 2012. Listening to him on the stump, you would have no idea that the economy is sunk in a subpar recovery and the nation's balance sheet is deep in the red, let alone that the welfare state is in crisis throughout the Western world. The President's approach amounts to fiddling while Athens burns, or at least defaults.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2113177,00.html>

What Obama Can Learn from LBJ by David Frum, Newsweek, April 23 & 30, 2012.

The fourth volume of Robert Caro's great biography of Lyndon Johnson—The Passage of Power—tells a story from seemingly long ago. Page after page conjures up a vanished world: a world in which labor unions had clout and lunch counters were segregated. Yet it's also a world deeply familiar to us: a world in which urgent national problems go unaddressed year after year, and Americans despair over the paralysis of their government.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/04/15/david-frum-on-obama-lessons-in-robert-caro-s-lyndon-johnson.html>

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



Michael Posner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy and Human Rights, speaking at a press conference

“Article 19 of the United Nations Charter states: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

World Press Freedom Day 2012

“Freedom of the press” is not just a slogan. Nor is it only for journalists. The right to receive and impart information is a universal one. Governments change. But public support for a free press should be constant because citizens are the ultimate beneficiary. A free press enhances the public’s right to know by encouraging the free exchange of information. Protecting it requires a national commitment, by government and the public alike.

Every year, May 3rd is a date which celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their

profession.

It serves as an occasion to inform citizens of violations of press freedom - a reminder that in dozens of countries around the world, publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered.

It is a date to encourage and develop initiatives in favour of press freedom, and to assess the state of press freedom worldwide.

It serves as a reminder to governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom and is also a day of reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics. Just as importantly, World Press Freedom Day is a day of support for media which are targets for the restraint, or abolition, of press freedom. It is also a day of remembrance for those journalists who lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.

Source: *Unesco*

EARTH DAY



Earth Day is an annual day on which events are held worldwide to increase awareness and appreciation of the Earth’s natural environment. Earth Day is now coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network, and is celebrated in more than 175 countries every year. In 2009, the United Nations designated April 22 International Mother Earth Day.

The name and concept of Earth Day was allegedly pioneered by John McConnell in 1969 at a UNESCO Conference in San Francisco. He proposed March 21, 1970, the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. This day of nature’s equipoise was later sanctioned in a Proclamation signed by Secretary General U Thant at the United Nations. About the same time a separate Earth Day was founded by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson as an environmental teach-in first held on April 22, 1970.

Source: *Epa.gov, Wikipedia*

THE AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER

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