

**Conference Convenors:**

**Dominic Bonfiglio** and **Susan Neiman**, Potsdam

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Many of the problems we face today cannot be solved without cooperation across nations, religions, and social classes. Yet traditional forms of solidarity such as the international labor movement have lost their force. Into the resulting void have come reawakened nationalisms whose leaders — all their protectionist and isolationist slogans notwithstanding — have sought to generate solidarity among the like-minded in other countries. How have rightwing populists managed to hijack and redefine the idea of solidarity? And why have cosmopolitan universalists been unable to provide convincing responses to global challenges? Can new forms of solidarity be found that go beyond the interests of particular groups? Doing so in this day and age will undoubtedly demand a high degree of political imagination — all the more reason to start trying now.

## Participants

**Aleida Assmann**, Konstanz

### **Human Rights and Human Responsibilities**

We are now very familiar with the claim that all humans everywhere have rights. But we are much less familiar with the notion that rights are protected by the fulfillment of duties, as Samuel Moyn observed in 2016. Thirty years ago, Onora O’Neill noticed that “although serious writing on human rights acknowledges that any right must entail correlative obligations, we find no Universal Declaration of Human Duties, and no international Human Obligations Movements.” My paper will pick up the issue of human duties in an attempt to re-launch this campaign. It will show that the history of this discourse is much older than that of human rights — indeed, it goes back 4,000 years — and that it is today timelier than ever because, as Moyn adds, “Human rights wither without a language of human duties.”

*Aleida Assmann* is Professor emerita of English Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Konstanz, Germany, where she taught from 1993–2014. She received an Honorary Degree from the University of Oslo (2008) and the Max Planck Research Award (2009). Her main areas of research are historical anthropology, history of media, history and theory of reading and writing, cultural memory, with special emphasis on Holocaust and trauma. Publications in English include *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices, and Trajectories* (ed. with Sebastian Conrad, 2010), *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (2012), *Memory and Political Change* (ed. with Linda Shortt, 2012), *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (2016).

**Pietro Bartolo**, Lampedusa

**Lampedusa: porta d'Europa. Un'isola icona della solidarietà e dell'accoglienza**  
(with simultaneous interpretation into English)

Lampedusa, the gateway to Europe, is always open. It has never put up walls or barriers. It has always welcomed and looked after those seeking help. The extraordinary people of Lampedusa have never protested or asked for anything in return, nor will they; to them, creating a welcoming atmosphere is a duty and a responsibility. Lampedusa regards those who arrive from the other side of the Mediterranean as human beings — as brothers, not numbers.

**Pietro Bartolo** was born in Lampedusa in 1956 to a fishermen's family. In 1987, he earned his medical degree with a specialization in gynecology and obstetrics. After briefly working in Catania and Syracuse, he returned to Lampedusa with his wife and daughter and took a position in Italy's national healthcare system. In 1991, as African migrants to Europe began arriving in Lampedusa in record numbers, he started working as a medical volunteer, treating those who had crossed the Mediterranean in search of a better life. He saved lives, but he also discovered the unpleasant circumstances in which the migrants found themselves. In 2015, the director Gianfranco Rosi asked to film some of his work for a documentary. Bartolo agreed in the hope of urging those still indifferent to the plight of Lampedusa's migrants to take concrete action. The resulting film, *Fire at Sea*, went on to win the Golden Bear at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival and was among the Oscar contenders for Best Documentary Feature in 2016.

**Omri Boehm**, New York

### **Truth and Solidarity**

“Take care of freedom, and truth will take care of itself.” Richard Rorty liked repeating this slogan to capture the essence of pragmatist American liberalism, as it was developed from Dewey to Rawls. He reiterated the same idea with a brilliant interpretation of Rawls' idea of reflective equilibrium, arguing that such equilibrium is the most mature assertion of the “priority of democracy to

philosophy” — that is, the primacy of democracy to truth. I shall argue that to the extent that liberalism relies on reflective equilibrium and not on some conception of truth, it cannot but replace truth with patriotism; a form of patriotism which — pace Rorty — is incompatible with the type of cosmopolitan solidarity nowadays very much in demand.

**Omri Boehm** teaches at The New School for Social Research, where he writes on early modern philosophy and philosophy of religion, with a specific focus on Descartes, Spinoza, and Kant. His books include *The Binding of Isaac: A Religious Model of Disobedience* (2007) and, more recently, *Kant’s Critique of Spinoza* (2014). In addition to his academic work, he has also written for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, and *Die Zeit*, among other publications. He is currently writing a book provisionally titled *Passion, Freedom, Reason: A Rereading in Descartes*. He holds a PhD from Yale University (2009).

**Dominic Bonfiglio**, Berlin

### **Disastrous Solidarity**

What is solidarity and why is it, in the words of the historian David Hollinger, “shaping up as the problem of the 21st century”? While all groups that show solidarity have to determine who constitutes the “we” and what, if anything, is owed to those who exist outside it, globalization has increased the size of the “we” to species level. In a sense, we are all neighbors, but we are neighbors who do not know each other and with whom we do not share the same language or the same values or even the same idea of reality. What makes this challenge particularly pressing is the awareness that the world’s stability, if not its sheer survival, depends on the creation of new forms of broad-based solidarity. Amid efforts to come up with alternatives, one place where people have been good at imaging solidarity on a truly global scale is in the wake of real or fictional disasters. What do the consequences of natural catastrophes, fantastic alien invasions, make-believe zombie apocalypses, and general mass destruction tell us about the kind of solidarity we need today?

**Dominic Bonfiglio** studied philosophy and art history at the Johns Hopkins University and at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where he received the master's thesis prize of the Carl-und-Max-Schneider-Stiftung. In addition to his work at the Einstein Forum, he translates books into English, including Jan Philipp Reemtsma's *Trust and Violence* (2012) and Jochen Hellbeck's *Stalingrad: The City that Defeated the Third Reich* (2015).

**Mischa Gabowitsch**, Potsdam

### **Sites of Practice**

Shared views or values alone do not create solidarity. Nor is community simply a matter of emotions. Togetherness is underpinned by places and things that we are intimately invested in—so intimately that we often find it hard to convey the depth and meaning of that affinity to outsiders. We inhabit them, and the ways in which we face the world, alone or jointly with others, are shaped by them. That is why we rarely articulate that connection: we are forced to do so mostly when they are questioned or threatened. What is special about sites of practice is that they can connect people who have a widely different but equally strong relationship with them. What can become a site of practice? A laptop, the true home of a networked nomad. An urban park: one person's picnic place, another's playground, a third one's jogging route. The nation. A tree. A character from a novel. A monument.

Populists have a nose for sites of practice, and a talent for monopolizing their meaning. To some, the tree might be their children's climbing frame; to others, a piece of greenery in their front yard. The populist declares it a symbol of the nation under siege, thus turning the nation's supposed enemies into assassins of our life worlds. Can we summon up new solidarities from sites of practice? Can we identify existing European sites of practice that might anchor community in diversity?

**Mischa Gabowitsch** is a researcher at the Einstein Forum. His most recent book publications are *Protest in Putin's Russia* (2016), and *Kriegsgedenken als Event: Der 9. Mai 2015 im postsozialistischen Europa* (2017, as co-editor). He is currently working on a history of Soviet war memorials. He is a member of the steering committee for a recently launched initiative called *Praxis Europa* that brings together academics and practitioners in search of a more democratic, just, and sustainable Europe.

**Konstanty Gebert**, Warsaw

### **Either Solidarity or Fraternity?**

Fraternity, one of the three slogans of the French revolution, called for a vision of society in which all Frenchmen were brothers. This eventually evolved into a vision of the nation based on adherence to a common ideal rather than being the result of pre-existing blood bonds; yet the word itself implied just that. Two hundred years later, the Polish solidarity movement declared mutual support between different groups based on their adherence to common ideals, yet it eventually evolved into a vision of nation as an organism, tied by bonds of blood. These two misnomers made for much misunderstanding; political evolution would have been much clearer had the names been reversed. The fraternity of solidarity will be examined in close detail.

**Konstanty Gebert** is an author, journalist, lecturer, and political activist based in Poland. In 1976 he graduated from the Department of Psychology at the University of Warsaw. He was a prominent figure in the democratic opposition in the 1970s and 1980s and cofounder of the unofficial Jewish Flying University (1979), the Polish Council of Christians and Jews (1980), and a trade union of the employees in academia, technology, and education that merged with Solidarnosc (1980). After the government imposed martial law, he wrote and published articles for various underground publications under the pseudonym Dawid Warszawski. Gebert also served as a war correspondent in Bosnia for *Gazeta Wyborcza*. His articles have appeared in a variety of national periodicals and foreign media. He has written numerous books, including a first-hand account of the Polish Round Table negotiations of 1989 as well as books on

French policy toward Poland, on the Yugoslav wars, the wars of Israel, Torah commentary, and postwar Polish Jewry. Gebert is the founder of *Midrasz*, the first Polish-language Jewish periodical in postcommunist Poland, and regularly lectures in Poland, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the U.S.

**Carey Harrison**, New York

### **Solidarity: Walking to Auschwitz**

This is the confession of someone who never much liked joining. I have joined; I joined the Communist Party; I joined the African National Council. But on the whole I've avoided churches and professional bodies of all kinds. I never felt the thrill and the *challenge* of solidarity more than the day I set out with my son to walk to Auschwitz. It was in January 2005, 60 years to the day after the death marches *out* of Auschwitz, when those deemed fit enough to walk were sent west, on foot, before the Russian Army. Along the old railway line we walked some 240 miles to Auschwitz from Budapest, where in the summer of 1944 the greatest number of Jews were deported to Auschwitz in the shortest time of any of the mass deportations, thanks to the relentless work of Adolf Eichmann. My son is named for his great-great-grandfather; many of our family, German Sephardic Jews who hailed from Poland, and before that from Turkey, and before that from Spain, died in the Shoah. Here I must break open the can of beans I bring with me to this gathering. I walked to Auschwitz with my son in a spirit of solidarity with the victims of the Shoah, and with my murdered family. But solidarity also, if that is the word—and you're welcome to challenge it — with the SS; with the murderers. They are inside us, no less than the victims. Until we understand that we too have a murderer inside us, we have no right to claim solidarity with anyone. First and foremost our solidarity needs to be with human nature; with humanity, if you will, but humanity in all its guises. Then and only then may we choose sides. That was the challenge of our walk; to find in ourselves not only the persecuted, but the persecutors.

**Carey Harrison** was born in London during The Blitz, the Luftwaffe's bombing onslaught, and as soon as the war ended he was taken to America, where he has lived on and off, for the past 72 years. The off periods have coincided with

his British education, at Harrow School and Cambridge, and a teaching post at Essex University. He has subsequently taught Comparative Literature at Cornell, at UC San Diego, at UT Austin, at the Florida Institute of Technology, and for the past 20 years at the City University of New York. He is the author of 16 novels and over 200 plays and scripts for TV, theatre, radio, and film. His work has been shown in 37 countries, and translated into 13 languages. His novels have won him a Fellowship at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, where he is currently in residence. He has addressed the Einstein Forum before, on the subject on American humor, and is Professor of Humor at CUNY's Brooklyn College.

**Stephen Holmes**, New York

### **How Democracies Die**

The flip-side of establishment-hating populism is the weakness of establishment political parties. Political parties keep democracy alive by channeling public frustration inside the system, subsidizing patience with disappointing incumbents by holding out the opportunity of electing an alternative governing team in the next elections. As establishment parties dissolve, frustration first finds expression by electing anti-system candidates who represent movements not parties. Subsequently, once these movement-candidates fail to produce the jobs they promised, frustrated citizens pour onto the streets, provoking a crisis in public order and a militarized police response. Violent clashes can legitimate authoritarian government which is how democracies die.

**Stephen Holmes** is Walter E. Meyer Professor of Law at the NYU School of Law. He previously taught at Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Chicago. His fields of specialization include the history of liberalism, the disappointments of democratization after communism, and the difficulty of combating terrorism within the limits of liberal constitutionalism. He is the author of *Benjamin Constant and the Making of Modern Liberalism* (1984), *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (1993), *Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (1995), and *The Matador's Cape: America's Reckless Response to Terror* (2007). He is co-author (with Cass Sunstein) of *The Cost of Rights: Why Liberty Depends*

*on Taxes* (1999) and (with Moshe Halbertal) of *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel* (2017).

**Alexander Koch**, Berlin

### **New Patrons – A Paradigm Shift in Cultural Production**

The New Patrons program provides citizens with the opportunity to realize their cultural and artistic visions in collaboration with internationally renowned artists. Citizens are themselves the patrons of these projects. Giving people from all walks of life the chance to participate in the creation of contemporary art — like so many private and public patrons before them — represents a radical shift. The sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour sees it as the start of a new chapter in art and social history, one in which the population at large becomes the initiator of a democratically representative production of art. Community members work together with mediators and artists as equal partners in the creation of public goods. The process overcomes institutionalized patterns of social exclusion and puts cultural participation back on its feet: people no longer merely consume art; they also have the right to procure it as they see fit.

**Alexander Koch** is a curator, gallerist, writer, lecturer, and cultural mediator whose work concentrates on economic and institutional transformations within the art world. In 2008, he co-founded KOW, a Berlin-based gallery that specializes in art with a social purpose and that has featured the work of international artists such as Hito Steyerl, Chto Delat, Tobias Zielony, and Candice Breitz. In 2008, Koch co-initiated the New Patrons program in Germany — an international network that provides citizens with the means to commission art projects in response to social issues — and today serves as its director. Koch has since started New Patrons initiatives in Africa and India.

**Ivan Krastev, Vienna**

### **After Europe**

With far-right nationalist parties on the rise across the continent and the United Kingdom planning for Brexit, the European Union is in disarray and plagued by doubts as never before. The challenges threatening Europe's survival are myriad: political destabilization sparked by the more than 1.3 million migrants from the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia; the spread of right-wing populism (taking into account the election of Donald Trump in the United States), and the thorny issues facing member states on the eastern flank of the EU (including the threat posed by Vladimir Putin's Russia). Some reflections on the ominous political, economic, and geopolitical future that would await the continent if the Union itself begins to disintegrate.

**Ivan Krastev** is Chair of the Center for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, Bulgaria, and a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna. He is a contributing opinion writer for the *International New York Times* and author of *Democracy Disrupted: The Politics of Global Protest* (2014).

**Thomas Meaney, Caputh**

### **The Once and Future Populist: Fieldnotes on the New German Right**

This talk is based on my reporting on the new right-wing Germany political party, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). The talk consists of three parts: the first part examines how the party is structured and how it cycles between radical provocations and gestures toward the center. The second part traces the intellectual roots of the ideological wing of the party. The third part of the paper consists in an informal analysis of party meetings and conferences, in which I argue that the binding glue of the party is its sense of betrayal and/or exclusion from the cultural and political reformation associated with the liberal gains of 1968 and the further liberal consolidations of the 1990s and 2000s. The paper ends by drawing some connections to the current regime in the US, as well as other populist phenomena around the world, and clarifies what is gained and lost by the current conceptualizations of populism on offer.

**Thomas Meaney** is the current Einstein fellow in residence at Caputh. He recently completed his doctorate in modern history at Columbia University, where he taught courses on history and literature. He has reported on Germany for the *New Yorker*, the *London Review of Books*, and the *Guardian Long Read*. He is also a regular contributor to the *Nation* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. Two current projects include a book on American thinkers and the problem of decolonization, and a short history of the 1990s at the global margins.

**Diana Pinto**, Paris

### **Must Solidarity Have an Identity?**

Can one still speak of an innate solidarity in our increasingly identity driven societies full of others or in an international context where nation states are becoming once again ever more powerful? Does solidarity imply a shared citizenship, shared religious, ethnic, international, humanitarian, or left-wing universal identities among those who give it and those who receive it? Think of “French doctors” or of those who provide international earthquake relief with their national flags sewn on their uniforms, or of the countless Christian, Muslim, or Jewish charities and their Asian equivalents, in the world. Can there be any positive identity-blind solidarity after the egregious failures of the United Nations on this count? The idea of having *solidarity with others* may have attracted much attention, but it loses its salience if one defines it in terms of the three pillars of ancient Greek tragedy: unity of time, unity of action, and unity of setting. In our increasingly distracted, present-driven societies, we seem to be failing on all three counts by not focusing on a given problem, preferring to follow emotions down often counterproductive paths, and by ignoring the long-term identity issues behind many humanitarian problems. The result is that one can wonder who benefits most from solidarity: those who offer it or its recipients, and with what perverse effects?

Can green solidarity, by focusing on local and also on global *shared* environmental challenges, offer a way of reconciling extremely different ethnic, religious, or identity groups inside each society and at the international level? Af-

ter all, we are all at the mercy of Nature and man's mishandling of it, whether in the rich North or in the poor South. For green solidarity to be inventive, it must transcend classic ecological issues to address the crucial issues of our day: how to integrate generations of immigrants in their countries, migrants in their host settings, and above all those who stay behind.

**Diana Pinto** is an intellectual historian and writer, educated in the United States (Harvard) and now living in Paris. As senior fellow at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research she has worked on the pan-European project *Voices for the Res Publica*. She also worked as a consultant to the Political Directorate of the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe for its civil society programs in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Pinto has been a Fulbright Fellow, and has received research grants from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Collegium Budapest. She has written widely on transatlantic issues and on Jewish life in contemporary Europe. Her autobiography *Entre deux mondes* (1991) is about her experiences living in Europe and the United States. Other book publications include *Contemporary Italian Sociology* (1981) and *Israel Has Moved* (2013).

**Jennifer Stollman**, Oxford/Miss.

### **Turning Apathy into Empathy: Building Communities Across a Divided American South**

Imagining solidarity is not new to the American South. From slavery to Jim Crow to the modern Civil Rights Movement, many Americans imagined and worked exhaustively to create solidarity, community, and justice. Nevertheless, historic legacies as well as contemporary events have led many southerners to believe that solidarity across racial and other differences is impossible. They argue that fatigue, retrenchment, and righteous anger create chasms. This presentation will describe effective techniques, strategies, and positionalities designed to bridge those chasms. I will show how analytical and emotional approaches, combined with an unwavering commitment to the idea that equity can be achieved, allow many paths toward equity and community in the American South.

*Jennifer Stollman* earned her combined doctorate in history and cultural anthropology at Michigan State and the University of Michigan. Her fields include American intellectual history, the transatlantic slave trade and African-American history, women's history, Native-American history, American religious history, labor history, the history of American medicine, cultural and critical theory, critical race and feminist theory, and the histories of memory and narratives on the body. Dedicated to the liberal arts, Stollman spent over twenty years teaching and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students while conducting research in Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, North Carolina, and Colorado. After being appointed Academic Director at the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation at the University of Mississippi five years ago, she has developed and presented anti-bias training, conducted crisis management, and facilitated dialogues on inequity in the Deep South and across the United States in high schools and higher education, hospitals, law enforcement agencies, juvenile justice systems, professional organizations, corporations, and non-profit organizations dedicated to health and wellness, and social and economic justice. Utilizing her academic and activist experience, Stollman has developed unique motivational and non-threatening techniques designed to reduce the stress, fracturing, and silence caused by discriminatory thoughts, behaviors, policies, and systems and to encourage the valuing of diverse individuals and perspectives. She has published widely and has presented her work across the United States and beyond.

## Program

### June 15, 2017

7:00 PM *Susan Neiman*

Welcome

7:10 PM *Carey Harrison*

Solidarity: Walking to Auschwitz

### June 16, 2017

10:30 AM *Dominic Bonfiglio*

Disastrous Solidarity

11:30 AM *Aleida Assmann*

Human Rights and Human Responsibilities

3:00 PM *Konstanty Gebert*

Either Solidarity or Fraternity?

4:00 PM *Ivan Krastev*

After Europe

5:30 PM *Pietro Bartolo*

Lampedusa: porta d'Europa.

Un'isola icona della solidarietà e dell'accoglienza (mit Simultanübersetzung ins Englische)

6:30 PM *Jennifer Stollman*

Turning Apathy into Empathy: Building Communities Across a Divided American South

### June 17, 2017

10:30 AM *Omri Boehm*

Truth and Solidarity

11:30 AM *Diana Pinto*

Must Solidarity Have an Identity?

12:45 PM *Mischa Gabowitsch*

Sites of Practice

3:30 PM *Stephen Holmes*

How Democracies Die

4:30 PM *Thomas Meaney*

The Once and Future Populist: Fieldnotes on the New German Right

6:00 PM *Alexander Koch*

New Patrons – A Paradigm Shift in Cultural Production