



## INDIANA UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

College of Arts and Sciences  
Bloomington

6 August 2024

Dr. Damian Pargas, Executive Director  
Roosevelt Institute for American Studies  
Middelburg, Netherlands

Dear Damian,

I am writing to you now to express my sincere gratitude for the wonderful opportunity and, really, honor, to be a Roosevelt Visiting Professor this spring.

I was in residence from May 6 through June 3. During that time, I devoted myself to expanding and revising a chapter of my current book project. The chapter examines a series of international conferences on the U.S. Bicentennial that was organized by Professor Robin Winks (Yale) and that brought together scholars to assess the status of and challenges facing the field of American studies on four different continents between 1975 and 1976. As a logistical matter in the days of snail mail and expensive international phone calls, pulling off six conferences and a capstone seminar was no small feat. As a political matter, the challenges were also great. For example, the civil rights and women's movements, the Vietnam War, and Watergate had undermined public confidence in official images of the U.S. as a beacon of democracy, and had also undone the previous alignment of the field of American studies with the U.S. State. Anti-Americanism was on the rise and, additionally, international political turbulence and tensions shaped almost all aspects of the conferences (indeed, a coup in Nigeria prompted a delay of the African conference days beforehand, with a change of venue to the Ivory Coast several months later).

My time at RIAS gave me a chance to set aside other projects (and distractions), to focus exclusively on this chapter, and to dive deep into the challenges of organizing a narrative that has so many focal points and moving pieces. The organization of a May 24 roundtable with the Netherlands American Studies Association, in which I presented with Joseph Heathcott (The New School), on the one hand gave me an opportunity to share this work with an audience for the first time and, on the other, helped me to focus my argument and main points. The ensuing questions and discussion were both stimulating and helpful. Additionally, both Joseph and I were excited by the overlaps and connections between our projects, which take a look at the U.S. and its changing landscapes, status, and institutions in the 1970s. I left the event with even more enthusiasm towards the project and I spent the remainder of my time at RIAS developing the ideas from my presentation in the longer version of my chapter.

In addition to making valuable progress with my research, my time at RIAS was also enriched by the opportunity to interact with colleagues—in particular, you, of course, Dario Fazzi, Gaetano Di Tommaso, and postdoc Jeanine Quené—and to learn about their work. A special shout-out goes to Leontien Joosse, who went above and beyond time and again in identifying resources that were indispensable to my stay being a success, and who has continued to be at the ready to support me. Intern Wynonna Freiburghaus was also very attentive. The time in Middelburg also allowed me to catch up and continue ongoing discussions about our work with Giles Scott-Smith, who has long spoken to me about RIAS and to whom I am very grateful for connecting me to you.

I cannot say how much I enjoyed the collegiality that I experienced at the RIAS: while breaking bread (or, rather, Zeeuwse bolussen) with one another during our coffee breaks, I learned important lessons about my temporary home and its history and, also, about what it means to work in American studies in an international context today, the latter of which gave me additional insights into my research for my chapter. I am also grateful for the opportunity to attend this year's William J. vanden Heuvel Memorial Lecture, which was given by US Ambassador to the Netherlands Shefali Razdan Duggal and focused on the topic of *Inclusive Democracy* (my mother, a former US diplomat who was visiting me in Middelburg, also attended). Additionally, I attended part of the annual Policy Workshop on “Immersive Learning and Participatory Governance: The Role of Virtual Exchanges in Sustainable Development,” where I got to see Dario and Gaetano in action and to learn from participating students and their professors.

Finally, I want to say what a pleasure it was to live in Middelburg and to learn about the city, Zeeland, and the Netherlands. I rode my bike all around Zeeland exploring the coastal cities and admiring their beauty and history (and being flummoxed by how one could get a headwind going both out and back!). I took the train to various cities in the Netherlands, as well as Brussels. And I took in the museums, monuments, and markers that still bear witness to the city's, and nation's, tragedies during the Holocaust and second World War as well as to their involvement in the slave trade and its afterlives.

My time at the RIAS will stay with me for both personal and professional reasons. I look forward to continuing the friendships that began here, and, hopefully, to returning in the future. I remain grateful to you for this wonderful and productive experience.

Sincerely,



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