



BIOGRAPHIES OF PANEL SPEAKERS AND MENTORS

SEPTEMBER 7, 2024

1. Panel Speaker for Ukraine/USSR: Anna Davidchuk
2. U.S. Mentor for Ukraine/Soviet Union: Tamara Fitzgerald
3. Panel Speaker for China (PRC): Anonymous Person
4. U.S. Mentor for China (PRC): Jim Pesnichak
5. Panel Speaker for Cuba: Lourdes Cruz
6. U.S. Mentor for Cuba: Donna Fournier
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BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT

NAME: Anna Davidchuk

COUNTRY OF BIRTH: Kyiv, Ukraine

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1951

YEAR YOU LEFT YOUR NATIVE COUNTRY: 1993

EDUCATION: High School Diploma 1969

5 Year College Degree 1977

PROFESSION: Full Charge Bookkeeper/Accountant

BACKGROUND NARRATIVE:

Anna was born in Soviet Ukraine in the year of 1951 in the capital city, Kyiv. (At the time, Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union from the year 1922 until 1991, when the Soviet Union dissolved, and Ukraine declared its Independence.) She lived in Kyiv with her family and went to school in the capital city. Anna graduated high school in 1969. After high school she worked for a few years, and then went to a local College of Technology to receive her college degree in 1977.

In 1993, Anna left her home country of Ukraine with her husband and family to find a better quality of life in the USA. Anna emigrated from Ukraine to the United States to make sure to be able to provide better future opportunities for her family. She arrived in New York City and worked there as a bookkeeper for 12 years until 2005, when she relocated to Bradenton, FL. She continued working as a bookkeeper here in Bradenton for 12 more years, until she retired 7 years ago and has been working part time since then. Anna still has family and friends living in Ukraine.

BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT

NAME: Tamara K. Fitzgerald

COUNTRY OF BIRTH: USA

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1962

YEAR YOU LEFT YOUR NATIVE COUNTRY: (N/A)

EDUCATION: BA: Central & East European Affairs; Russian Language Studies
University of Colorado, Boulder, with Distinction, 1988
MS: National Security Strategy, National War College
National Defense University, Washington, D.C.

PROFESSION: Foreign Service Officer (Diplomat), Department of State
Washington, D.C. and abroad, 28 ½ years
Sergeant, U.S. Army, West Berlin, Germany, 5 ½ years

BACKGROUND NARRATIVE:

Tamara (Tammy) Fitzgerald retired from the Department of State in September 2018 as a career member of the U.S. Senior Foreign Service. Starting in 1990, Ms. Fitzgerald served at the U.S. Embassies in Port of Spain, Moscow, Minsk, Berlin, Canberra, and Baghdad. Her final rank was the diplomatic equivalent of a one-star general. For her last assignment, Ms. Fitzgerald was on the faculty of the U.S. Army War College, serving as the State Department Advisor at one of its institutes, where alongside teaching duties, Professor Fitzgerald also wrote diplomatic case studies, and participated in international civil-military exercises as a trainer. Ms. Fitzgerald previously served as the U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague, and then as Arms Control Counselor in the U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna. In these roles she negotiated with diplomats from over 160 countries on WMD and conventional arms control treaties.

Prior to those two assignments Ms. Fitzgerald served as the Foreign Policy Advisor (POLAD) in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) HQ in Kabul, Afghanistan, advising on governance issues in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) across the country, and then as the POLAD to U.S. Air Forces Central Command (USAFCENT) in Qatar where she provided diplomatic, political, and economic guidance to the three-star Command. Ms. Fitzgerald also worked at the Department of State in the Nuclear Risk Reduction Center, dealing with strategic arms control treaty policies and operations. Thus, she focused on national security policy throughout her diplomatic career, mainly in multilateral arms control and non-proliferation, or on alliance building with NATO and Persian Gulf countries and with Australia. She speaks Russian and German and is the recipient of several State Department Superior and Meritorious Honor Awards, as well as Defense Department and Intelligence Community Commendations.

BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT

NAME: Anonymous

COUNTRY OF BIRTH: People's Republic of China

YEAR OF BIRTH: ???

YEAR YOU LEFT YOUR NATIVE COUNTRY: ???

EDUCATION: ???

PROFESSION: ???

BACKGROUND NARRATIVE: Our Chinese-born panelist has a well-reasoned fear of retribution against family members, friends, and herself by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) if she is identified as she speaks about the realities of life in China.

Name: **James (Jim) Pesnichak**

Country of Birth: USA

Years I left my native country: 1996 - 2000

Education: Bachelor's Degree - Electrical Engineering

Profession: Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, Manufacturing

LKB Instruments Washington DC. clinical and laboratory scientific instrumentation field in Washington, DC. & **Finnegan Corp**, Mid-Atlantic service manager Gas Chromatograph / Mass Spectrometers.

EDS / GM Information Systems Analyst at the GM Technical Center, Detroit Michigan

EDS / GM Account Manager, Willow Run and Buick City assembly center in Willow Run and Flint Michigan.

EDS Regional Manager Bethlehem **Steel**, Burns Harbor Indiana, Information systems, IT planning, integration, Business Process Reengineering and the management of the commercial and the plant floor systems.

EDS / GM China Country Director (1996-2000) in support of EDS/General Motors in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Responsibilities: Sales and Operations. He lived in Northwest Beijing with his family; his sons went to the International School of Beijing. Pesnichak was responsible for the implementation of all the IT systems for the first GM assembly / stamping plant in Shanghai (Pudung) China. His job required 24/7 living in Beijing, working at the GM China HQ facilities. He had a staff of 45 Chinese nationals and other foreign Expats. He was responsible for maintaining and growing the EDS IT business and service delivery duties for GM and Delphi in mainland Peoples Republic of China. He was also responsible for EDS / GM Sales and marketing in Hong Kong and Taiwan. These responsibilities required extensive travel across mainland China and the Asia Pacific. In 1996, Jim also assumed the head of the EDS American Chamber of Commerce in Beijing. In this role he participated in addressing EDS / China business issues in the PRC, and he addressed Congress on the 1997 Washington "Door Knock." In this 2-week activity he interviewed US Senators and Congressmen in Washington, DC on behalf of the China business community.

EDS / GM North America - Client Executive - Upon repatriation, Pesnichak was responsible for management of all Information System operations at 24 GM Car, Truck and Saturn assembly operations in Canada, Mexico and the US.

HP County Director - HP Nokia Cell phone manufacturing for North and South America.

Board of Directors for the United Way (Indiana) and volunteered on numerous charity activities including **Habitat for Humanity**, **Our Next Mission** (refurbishing trailers for veterans) and Christmas in April projects, Indiana.

BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT

NAME: Lourdes Cruz

COUNTRY OF BIRTH: Cuba; Naturalized United States Citizen

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1958

YEAR YOU LEFT YOUR NATIVE COUNTRY: 1962 Feb

EDUCATION: Associates Applied Science

PROFESSION: Registered Nurse 1998, Banking 18 yrs

BACKGROUND NARRATIVE: My Memories - Born in Cuba 1958 But Raised Cubana and American.

I was born in Cuba in 1958; we four flew to the USA in Feb 1962. I turned four in April, my brother 7 that Sept, our father & mother 35 & 30 in Oct. **This year my mother will be 92.** (1966 my brother was born in the U.S.) On Visitor Visas we arrived in Miami and my father immediately sought political asylum; it was granted. My father's older brother sponsored us; he was living and studying in NY State.

We had always been Cubano. I've never met a relative or close family friend that wasn't 100% Cuban. Almost all our families lived in the same small town: Consolacion del Sur ~ 90 miles West of Havana.

2024 Cuba: For decades food/product shortages and daily electric power interruptions have continued. "Every year we authorize billions of dollars' worth of exports to Cuba... **Advancing democracy and human rights remain at the core of our policy efforts**" 2021 Political Coordinator, **US Mission**, UN, Rodney Hunter, in regard to US embargo of Cuba (new/[un.org](https://www.un.org))

I brought a doll from Cuba in 1962. My father risked being delayed when at the Havana airport he argued with personnel because they were going to take my doll.

In 1962, **six months after arriving, my mother** had a mental health crisis and was hospitalized. The stress had been too much for a sheltered young mother refugee. Mommy feared she'd never see our family and Cuba again. She reunited with family years later, but never saw Cuba again.

My father refused Communism and by 1960 **his objective was to escape Castro's Regime, Communism.** He said to my young mother, **'I'm going to America, will you and the children come with me? I'm sorry, but if you won't go, I still have to go, I have to leave Cuba.'** My father wasn't being cruel, on the contrary, he believed the situation was becoming more dire every day and was afraid for us. He said it was best for us to leave Cuba.

A Right and Privilege. Every Cuban I've ever known has been grateful and has taken being here seriously. My mother is a Permanent Resident. Sadly, she's not a US Citizen, a personal regret because she's wanted to be a U.S. Citizen; and to Vote.

Communism changed everything for the Island nation, perhaps the worst was **dividing families**, physically and ideologically. Cubans arrived in the US angry, sad, in shock, grateful and determined. In the 60s/70s many Cubans felt guilty living free in the U.S. while families suffered in Communist Cuba. We felt a duty to help *'la familia'* get out of Cuba; to **Amerreca!**

My father knew Fidel Castro at the University of Havana and later heard rumors; Castro began his guerilla war by 1953. After Jan 1959 my father was leery of Fidel's Government. **My father Carlos** was in his early 30s in 1950s Cuba, an Asst Town Clerk and pre-law student. In 1962 in the U.S., he gratefully mopped floors at the University of Rochester. ** He **earned two Master's Degrees at that same University**, became Supervisor of the Language Lab and a part-time professor of Spanish. He also worked a second part-time job to support us five.

The 1960s Cuban refugees have lived **in the U.S. longer than in Cuba**. Our older Cuban generation in the U.S. is dying, their memories and stories with them. In their honor we gather to mourn but also to celebrate their lives, their courage, and to share their story.

Visiting friends' homes as a teenager **I realized we didn't have anything from our Cuban ancestors except my grandfather's watch.** Over the years I gained a better understanding of what Cuban families had experienced.

The Freedom Flights 1965-73 (*Los vuelos de la libertad*): **"A climate of fear prevailed over all aspects of (Cuban) life.** "Everyone lives in fear all the time." "Cuba itself was a prison."^[2] María when she first saw the (U.S.): "I cried quietly while kissing the American flag and said a prayer. For the first time in my life, I felt free."^[1] [Wikipedia Freedom Flights](#)

In the 1960s/70s many of our relatives flew to the U.S. "In an effort to rid Cuba of political dissidents, Fidel Castro announced on Sept 28, 1965, that he would allow any Cuban who had relatives in the U.S. to leave the island...an agreement between the U.S. and Cuban governments resulted in **the Freedom Flights, an airlift of twice-daily flights between Cuba and Miami.** Nearly 270,000 Cuban refugees were reunified with their families in the U.S. from **December 1, 1965, to April 6, 1973.**" Scholar.library. miami, edu/digital/exhibits/show/freedom/exodus

"Persecution in Cuba: Although the Castro government initially allowed citizens to leave, the Govt would eventually discourage emigration by harassing and humiliating Cubans who signed up for the program. The Freedom Flights quickly gained popularity; by March 1968, over one million people were on the waiting list... **"Brain Drain: This emigration effectively became a "brain drain" of Cuba's human capital, as the professionals needed to sustain Cuba's economy relocated to the United States.**^[5] The effects were so severe that Castro repeatedly complained ... as the economic effects intensified..." [Wikipedia Freedom Flights](#)

Six decades after the Cuban Revolution, it remains a Communist country. Current Island Cubans younger than 60 haven't ever known Una Cuba Libre (a Free Cuba). 1960s, Cubans in the U.S. thought they'd soon see **Una CUBA LIBRE!** Afterall, Communism and Castro couldn't be allowed to continue; even the US Govt said so. (Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis).

“In 1961, Gloria Estefan’s father Jose participated in the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion. He was captured by his cousin, who was a member of Fidel Castro’s army, and imprisoned in Cuba for nearly two years.” Then she and her mother were able to fly to U.S.; her father got out by boat. Wikipedia Gloria Estefan

Castro’s daughter Alina Fernandez, “Looking back then, I can say since *the very moment the executions took place, fear embraced the population and the country and stayed forever. Not much has changed in 50 years.* (2010 The Times, local news outlet; Fernandez spoke at Gainesville University) (She fled Cuba in disguise in 1993.)

One of my cousins recalls her brave father was taken to work at farms but **when they came for her teenage sister, her father wouldn’t allow them to take her. For his courage my uncle was punished more often.** My father’s uncle was imprisoned for years beginning in the 1960s for denouncing Communism/the Gov; once freed he remained in Cuba. In the 1960s/70s the Regime **harassed, imprisoned, took citizens away to work in farms and camps, or they were exiled or executed.** Each time the families **feared the abducted wouldn’t return.**

“Communism proposes a society in which everyone shares the benefits of labor equality and eliminates the class system through redistribution of income.” (UNC Center for European Studies UN Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Director, FBI 2020 July 7 C. Wray - China’s Attempt to Influence U.S. Institutions, Hudson Institute. “The greatest long-term threat to our nation’s information and intellectual property, and to our economic vitality, is the counterintelligence and economic espionage threat from China. It’s a threat to our economic security—and by extension, to our national security... As National Security Advisor O’Brien said in his recent remarks (2021), we cannot close our eyes and ears to what China is doing... let me be clear: **This is not about the Chinese people, and certainly not about Chinese Americans.** ...when I speak of the threat from China, I mean the government of China and the **Chinese Communist Party.**” (Video Event; Hudson Institute, Washington, D.C.)

Fidel Castro, during a May 2001 tour of Iran, Syria, Libya; at Tehran University. "Iran and Cuba, in cooperation with each other, can bring America to its knees. The U.S. regime is very weak, and we are witnessing this weakness from close up." September 11, 2001, Planes flew into the NYC Twin Towers, the Pentagon and Shanksville PA.

“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” (Attributed to 19th century English historian Lord Acton Dictionary.com)

“When (Batista) returned to power in 1952, he ruled as an increasingly brutal dictator until he was overthrown by Castro in 1959.” (Britanica 24Aug02)

End

BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT

NAME: Commander Donna J. Fournier, USN Retired

COUNTRY OF BIRTH: USA

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1948

YEAR YOU LEFT YOUR NATIVE COUNTRY: (N/A)

EDUCATION: BA - American History; Northeastern Illinois University, 1970

MA - American Studies; Northeastern Illinois University, 1972

NWC: Naval War College, Command & Staff, 2002

PROFESSION: Professor Fournier taught fourteen years as an adjunct history professor for Columbia College, Missouri. She is currently on the faculty of Adler University, Chicago, teaching in their on-line master's degree program in Military Psychology. She is a 47-year veteran educator who has taught on all grade levels for various Chicago educational systems.

During Commander Fournier's 26 years of service in the U.S. Naval Reserve Intelligence Program (1978-2003), she was assigned to Naval Intelligence units at NAS Glenview and Great Lakes, Illinois.

BACKGROUND NARRATIVE:

On active duty, Donna served as a physical security specialist on the staff of the Commander of the Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. During the Cold War Donna worked in counterintelligence and as a naval criminal investigator with NCIS. During the early War on Terrorism, she became a counterterrorism and a geopolitical analyst for the Defense Intelligence Agency. As a Commander, she was assigned as an Action Officer for the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Plans and Policy N3/N5, in the Pentagon.

In civilian life from 1989-1991, she also worked in the Pentagon as a Special Consultant to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Military Equal Opportunity. There she researched and wrote about the history of women in the military.

Her intelligence career culminated in being the senior military officer in charge of a department providing terrorism and force protection reports for the U.S. European Command, Joint Analysis Center, Molesworth Airbase, UK.

As an educator she has taught all areas of European and American history, but her real passion is foreign policy and military history. Among many other volunteer roles, Donna is currently the President of the Women Veterans of the Gulf Coast.

BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT: Jaime Arellano -- "The Voice of Nicaragua"

Profession: Journalist; Director of his own TV Radio Shows

Fighting Socialism and Communism for more than 30 years.

Jaime was exiled three times, and he avoided four assassination attempts.

In 2021 the Ortega regime sentenced him to 13 years in prison, until in February of 2023 when the U.S. State Department made a deal with the Sandinista Government and sent a plane to pick up over 200 political prisoners, including Jaime. Upon his arrival in the United States, he received medical treatment to recuperate from a stroke and other ailments suffered during his imprisonment. As his health has improved, he has not wasted any time.

He has been traveling to Washington to meet with Senators and Members of Congress, as well as with local groups, trying to wake up Americans.

Mr. Arellano's passion is to help people understand the socialist/communist playbook and the parallels he sees here in the U.S. to what he has witnessed in other countries.

Jaime now lives with his son in Tampa.

"I accept that I can be defeated; what I cannot accept is sitting in front of my children and telling them that they live in a country like the current one because I have not had the courage to fight for the changes needed."

BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT

NAME: Jack D. May, Jr.

COUNTRY OF BIRTH: USA

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1953

EDUCATION: Polk Jr. College, Liberty University, United States Army Field Artillery Schools

PROFESSION: Field Artilleryman, Business Owner

BACKGROUND NARRATIVE:

After beginning my college studies in 1972, I was drafted and entered the US Army. My first seven years of service were as an enlisted soldier, serving as a field artillery crewman, attaining the rank of E-6, Staff Sergeant. Entering Officer Candidate School, I was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1978. Upon entering the officer corps, I graduated from the United States Army Officers' Field Artillery School, and then graduated from intermediate and secondary schools for staff assignments and leadership, preparing me for my assignments as a company grade officer.

My many roles include Forward Observation Team Leader, Fire Direction Officer, Firing Battery Executive officer, Battalion Staff Intelligence Officer (S-2), Firing Battery Commander, Battalion Logistics Officer (S-4), and Headquarters / Service Battery Commander.

During my years of service (1972 – 1992) I had the pleasure of assignments to Southern Command, then located in the Panama Canal Zone, and assumed duties with the 53rd Infantry Brigade (Separate) / 2nd Battalion – 116th Field Artillery. The most notable being:

1. Working to coordinate and maintain the safety and operation of the Panama Canal and providing support to Operation Just Cause (December 1989 – January 1990)
2. Training US and Honduran Field Artillery forces in our quest to quell the communist threats to Central America from Cuba, and Nicaragua. (Nicaraguan Revolution (1981-1990))
3. Worked with the State Department to install indirect firing points along the border of Honduras and Nicaragua, as a deterrent to any offensive military threats to Honduras.
4. Gathering mission intelligence on the presence and impact of the Cuban military in Nicaragua.
5. Writing doctrine concerning Artillery Operations in a Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) within the Southern Command's area of responsibility (Central and South America).

After retiring from my military duties with the Florida National Guard, I turned all of my attention to business ownership and roles of leadership and teaching in my local church.

I encourage both public and private service within the community. We all have an important role in preserving and maintaining a vibrant republic, protecting our freedoms and rights from oppressors both foreign and domestic.

BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT: Grace Jo

Grace Jo was born in North Korea, a place where she almost starved to death as a child. Two of Grace's brothers died of starvation. Grace's father was tortured and starved to death, he passed away when North Korean agents transferred him from a detention center to a jail and his "crime" was that he left his country in search of food for his family.

One of Grace's older sisters went to China to find food for her family but went missing and was probably sold into human trafficking. Grace was repatriated twice to North Korea by the Chinese government and suffered imprisonment after she was repatriated. Grace's mother and one of Grace's sisters were repatriated four times and suffered torture after repatriation. In 2006 Pastor Philip Buck bribed North Korean agents to let Grace and her two remaining family members escape North Korea. In 2008, the UNHCR rescued Grace and her family from China, and enabled them to enter the United States of America as legal refugees.

Grace is one of 370 refugees from North Korea who have settled in the U.S. Currently, Grace lives in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2013, Grace became a U.S. citizen. Alongside her family, she has protested the forced repatriation of North Korean escapees hiding out in China. Grace served as a vice president for an organization, NKinUSA which helps North Korean defectors in rescue, resettlement, and emergency assistance.

BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT: Scott J. Phillipott

****Scott J. Phillipott, CAPT (USN-Ret.) **** is a distinguished retired U.S. Navy officer with 26 years of service, including command of four Navy ships, such as an Aegis Guided Missile Cruiser. His expertise spans innovative problem-solving at high levels of the U.S. Government, particularly in the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Navy systems.

Phillipott's recent work with Valkyrie Enterprises involved developing "big data" analytics frameworks to support the Aegis Combat Weapons system. He has pioneered the creation of a prototype big data architecture, ****Aegis.ALL****, which manages and analyzes large data sets to monitor fleet conditions in real time. His previous roles include serving as Lead Cyber Analyst at the Navy Warfare Development Center, where he researched cyberspace operations and designed systems to support global military operations.

A veteran of numerous high-profile positions, including Commanding Officer of the ****USS LEYTE GULF (CG-55)****, Phillipott has successfully deployed in multiple warzones, contributing to the improvement of naval operational decision-making. His background also includes roles with the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), where he integrated neural networks and AI into intelligence and operational processes.

Phillipott holds a Master's degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College and is completing his doctorate in Management and Organizational Leadership.