



INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF RHODE ISLAND

Dear Friends,

What times we're in. The past several months have been among the most challenging in modern times. We've seen over one million die from Covid-19 globally, including over 200,000 in the United States and over 1,000 in Rhode Island. The murder of George Floyd, and centuries of structural racism, have led to widespread protests both internationally and locally in our communities. Inequities in our society, including xenophobic threats to immigrants, are more pronounced than ever. The climate crisis rages on. Throughout, there is increased polarization in our society that is troubling and pervasive, amidst the backdrop of a contentious presidential election.

At our October Socrates Cafe we had a thoughtful and inspiring discussion on "how to find the good in the bad." The conversation reinforced for me the importance of personal agency: how small, individual acts can sustain optimism and impact systemic change. When I reflect more broadly on the work of International House during these uncertain times, I am convinced our work promoting cross-cultural understanding - conversation by conversation - is as important as ever.

While we typically do this through in person gatherings and activities, these last six months have looked a bit different. This spring, soon after Rhode Island's stay at home order, we quickly transitioned to Zoom and moved all of our classes and tutoring online. Our weekly virtual lunch, on topics ranging from racial inequities in healthcare, to recent immigration restrictions, to presentations by our inspiring residents and alumni, have been going strong nearly every week. We were deeply inspired by our international students from around the world who shared their poetry at an online gathering with more than fifty attendees. While we have missed being together in person, we are most certainly together apart.

With the artistic contribution from Hui-Tzu Peng, a current IH student from Taiwan, we launched IH's new logo and branding (which you will notice in the newsletter) and started a process of revamping our website. Thank you to everyone who filled out our community survey which informed this project.

We will continue online programming for the time being with limited in person and small 1-1 sessions at the House. Our beautiful, historic house continues to be a residence for graduate students and postdocs from around the world, currently housing individuals from China, Germany, Hong Kong, and Turkey.

With all of our programs online, we will look to move forward with needed capital improvement projects on the House and will share more details on the status of these projects in the months ahead. We look forward to when we can gather for larger group activities at International House and are planning for that time.

Please see inside for upcoming activities and mark your calendars for our Open House Annual Meeting on November 18th on Zoom. We have been sharing regular weekly updates in our e-newsletter and will continue this in the months ahead - please subscribe if you would like to receive our weekly announcements.

It is the people and their stories that make International House the special organization that it is. I am thrilled to share with you on page 4 the first of a series of student stories - Michaela and Zita's story. In Michaela's words, *"International House is like a bridge, connecting different kinds of people. There's a feeling at IH that is different. You feel like you are at home."*

Sending all my best to you and your families. Stay well.

Sincerely,

Alex Holt
Executive Director



INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF RHODE ISLAND

A SNAPSHOT

International House Happenings

We held a series of virtual gatherings over the past months bringing our community together on diverse topics. Many of these were recorded. See our website and YouTube Channel for recordings. Thank you to all of our presenters! Some of the topics and presentations included:

- *Global Surgery and Social Change*
- *Jim Crow to Black Lives Matter*
- *Life after Brown as a Public Health Graduate*
- *Unschooling Art*
- *The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe*
- *Creative Responses to Covid-19 in the Czech Republic*
- *Racial Equity in Healthcare*
- *The Poetry of Holman Day*
- *Story of a Voyage to Saint-Domingue and to Virginia*



ONLINE WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER - MAKE SURE YOU RECEIVE IT!

Since March, we've been sending a weekly e-newsletter. Please join our email list to receive weekly updates about events and happenings. You can subscribe on our website or contact Linda to make sure you receive it.

*For Zoom Links
Go To ihouseri.org*

Upcoming Events

Virtual Lunch Series

Wednesdays at 12:30 - 1:30 pm | On Zoom



- 11/04 Discussion - The American Election
- 11/11 The Influence of Global Folk Songs on Musical Composers with Jamie Allen
- 11/18 The Importance of Statues as Symbols of Identity, a Post-Soviet Perspective with Joe Colleyshaw
- 12/02 Women in Rhode Island History: Making a Difference with Jane Lancaster
- 12/09 Socrates Cafe

French Club



Monday, 11/9 at 7 pm | On Zoom

The French Club will resume its monthly gathering in November! The French club gathers to hear a talk, in French, about a range of topics. All levels of French speakers are welcome to attend. This month the presenter will be award winning poet, Alfred Corn, reading his poetry and translations. A discussion will follow the reading.

Annual Meeting

Wednesday, 11/18 at 6 pm | On Zoom

Join us for an informative, fun, engaging evening. You will hear from International House staff, board members, students, residents and there will be small break out rooms to ask questions and connect with other members.

Burns Night Supper: Friday, 1/29 at 7:45 pm | On Zoom

Save the date! We will have a festive, virtual Burns Night celebration including a home delivery of whiskey and shortbread. Tickets will go on sale in November.

Online International Friendship Program: We are looking into launching a newly updated online friendship program matching international students and local residents. Stay tuned for more information.

Holiday Bazaar: Due to Covid-19, we will not have a Holiday Bazaar or be accepting Bazaar item donations this year.

Weekly Classes

Monday

9:30 - 11:00 am: French Salon De Conversation (Advanced)

10:00 - 11:00 am: Meditation Class

2:30 - 4:00 pm: Italian Avanzato (Advanced)

Tuesday

9:30 - 11:00 am: English Conversation - Two Classes, Intermediate & Advanced

11:00 am - 12:30 pm: English Conversation - Two Classes, Intermediate & Advanced

Wednesday

12:30 - 1:30 pm: Virtual Lunch (see pg. 2 for details)

2:30 - 4:00 pm: Short-Story Book Club for International Students

Thursday

9:30 - 11:00 am: English Conversation - Two Classes, Intermediate & Advanced

11:00 am - 12:30 pm: English Conversation - Two Classes, Intermediate & Advanced

Friday

10:00 - 11:00 am: Yoga Class

*For Zoom Links
Go To ihouser.org*

English & Foreign Language Tutors

Students and Tutors are matched one-to-one for an hour or an hour and a half meeting weekly with focus on the student's needs. Sessions scheduled according to students and tutors availability. See our website for more information.



Get Involved

With a small staff, we wouldn't be able to do what we do without the support from all of you. Thank you for your time, commitment and contributions. If you are looking for ways to get involved here are some upcoming and ongoing opportunities:



Language Tutors & Teachers

We are always looking to build our roster of available tutors and teachers. You can arrange a time to observe one of our classes on Zoom and speak with a current teacher/tutor to learn more.

Salesforce and Data Management

We have implemented a new Salesforce CRM system. If you have experience with designing, administering or using Salesforce and would like to contribute your expertise to our efforts, let us know.

Multimedia

If you have specialized skills in this area, especially video editing, we can use your assistance.

Host or Create an Event

Many of our program ideas come from the community. If you'd like to create an event or program with us, please send an overview of your idea. We'd love to hear more.

Donate

Support the house financially by mailing a check to 8 Stimson Ave., Providence, RI 02906 or by credit card online. For other ways to donate please contact John Walker at john@ihouser.org or call (401) 421-7181.

Student Story

Michaela & Zita Cermakova

Czech Republic 



In the Spring of 2017, Michaela Cermakova and her daughter Zita arrived in Rhode Island. “My husband Jiri had recently accepted a new 3-year position at Schneider Electric, and we were excited for our family’s new adventure!”

Looking for a place to learn English and acclimate to their new community, they heard about International House from a friend.

“From our first visit, we felt at home,” Michaela says. “It’s not only about language, it’s about people and friendship. International House is like a bridge, connecting different kinds of people. There’s a feeling at IH that is different. You feel like you are at home. Maybe it’s the house itself? It really is a home away from home.”

“With ordinary language classes, people go to class, then leave. But at IH — even on Zoom — students linger and socialize, developing friendships with other students, international people and local residents. It’s a real community.” Michaela and Zita both served on committees, joined groups, and volunteered at events like our Burns Dinner and Holiday Bazaar. “In addition to taking classes, Zita and I each had regular 1-1 tutoring sessions with Bob Vachon (a local volunteer and current chair of the Board of Directors).

Each week Bob tutored each of us with individualized lessons and a great friendship has developed with him and so many others.”

Michaela and Zita have been stalwarts in the kitchen. Preparing appetizers, organizing the kitchen, serving food and cleaning up. And what chefs they are! From traditional Czech main dishes to their famous apple strudel, which everyone loved.

“We’ve really enjoyed the Thursday Potluck lunches and dinners. We’ve learned so much about food. But really the food has been a bridge to conversations and getting to know people from different cultures,” says Michaela. With their warm personalities, Michaela and Zita always graced the discussion among people from different cultures.

Zita and Michaela recently returned to the Czech Republic. They have promoted friendship, learning and connections. They are the fabric of what International House represents. Certainly, their physical presence will be missed, but in the age of Zoom, they’ll always be part of International House. We bid them *děkuji a přeji hodně štěstí* (thank you and good luck!).



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