



# *News*

## **BULLETIN**

From the Servas International Executive Committee



Meet a Servas host born during World War ONE.



**BULLETIN**

**From the Servas International Executive Committee**

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## Tech Development for the Future of Servas



Technology is continuing to evolve and it is critical that Servas also evolves with it. Today, mobile devices, mapping systems, instant messaging, video calls, and an almost unlimited variety of social media make it possible to communicate in far more ways than the email and website we use today. For Servas to grow, it is essential that our online presence is easily accessible and attractive to the millennial generations.



We have learned a lot with the development of our current ServasOnline system, and there are some things that we would like to improve. However, the most important changes are providing a platform that can evolve to meet the needs of the future and can be maintained and managed by technical volunteers, such as the teams presented in this issue of SI News.



We are now developing a new version of ServasOnline with the intention of making it the platform for the future of Servas. **You are most welcome to join our team and help.** Interested to volunteer? Please send an email to [mts@servas.org](mailto:mts@servas.org) with a short description of yourself.

Thank you, Jim Leask & Paul Nielsen

Joint SI Membership & Technology Secretary, [mts@servas.org](mailto:mts@servas.org)



Jim Leask

&



Paul Nielsen

# MESSAGE from

## Jonny Sågänger, SI President

### Online Meetings are now also across National Borders

Servas has always been promoting meetings between people to facilitate for our members' cultural learning experiences across national borders. What started as solely physical encounters have over the last decades become more diversified with the emergence of the internet and the spread of global communications tools. These tools have made it much simpler to keep in contact with Servas fellows that we have got to know while hosting and visiting each other as well as at national and international meetings.

The communication tools have also made it easier to promote domestic Servas events and other activities across national borders. There's a tradition of national groups inviting individual members of other nationalities to their different events; for example bicycling and hiking. Now this tradition of inviting each other across borders has evolved and converted to our world of electronic global communications.

Servas USA is becoming a pioneer in this development, since they have opened up their internet based events to members of other national member groups.



SI President, Jonny Sågänger  
Photographer: Dan Coleman

This is a development that has been well underway for some years, but it has been fuelled by the ongoing covid-19 pandemic which forces us to keep distance and stops us from meeting in person.

Read more about the Servas USA initiative on page 15 in this newsletter.

### SI Distant Vote : Virtual SI GA planned for 2022

The Servas member groups have decided that the next

Servas International General Assembly (SI GA) should be rescheduled from 2021 to 2022. The decision was made through a SI Distant Vote (SI DV) in November 2020. These are the main implications of the SI DV:

- The members of the current SI Exco will have their mandate periods extended for one year from 2021 to SI GA 2022.
- Through the SI DV the member groups also decided that SI Exco has a responsibility to develop a concept for a virtual SI GA.

Facts about the SI DV done in November 2020:

Out of the 69 member groups eligible to vote at the SI DV 48 participated and 21 member groups did not vote. 45 of the

participating member groups approved the SI DV motion and one member group voted against, Two of the votes were invalid ballots.

## **SI DV May 2021: Member groups to decide new SI funding model**

SI Exco decided at the December 20, 2020 meeting to approve a motion about a new SI funding model and a new funding formula to be decided by a Servas International Distant Vote (SI DV) in May 2021.

Please find the schedule for the SI Distant Votes in May and November 2021 on servas.org at: <https://bit.ly/37Xct1v>

## **May & November Distant Vote Schedule**

### **Get to know Servas – read the SI annual report!**

The Servas International Annual Report 2019/2020 for the extended period January 2019 to March 31 2020 has been uploaded on servas.org. You find it on servas.org: <https://servas.org/en/community/board-and-management/administration>

This is a great source for everyone who would like to learn more about the large number of activities that are arranged by individual Servas members, national groups and international teams around the world. Starting on page 90 in the annual report you find all the annual reports that have been submitted by the national Servas groups to Servas International.



# Violette: Our Most Experienced Member

## Interview of Violette Ginger, Saturday, October 17, 2020

Violette Ginger is the oldest member of Servas France and the worldwide program too! She's now 103 years old; still living in her home in Paris, and is pretty dynamic and active. She has been very involved in Servas as an interviewer.



Interviewer  
and Writer:  
Genevieve Aubert,  
Secrétaire générale  
of Servas France

## Membership



Violette Ginger

### ***When did you join Servas and how did it happen?***

It was around 1975.

My husband Basile was travelling in the United States where distances are so far, people prefer airplanes. But he preferred the train; it's much easier to contact people. At a small hotel in New York he met a couple who were Servas members. When he came home, we discussed that and I thought it was an interesting organization.

## Hosting

### ***What is your experience as a host?***

We had been hosts before being travelers. Since the beginning we have received many requests. We were wondering why — they didn't know us, they didn't know if we were kind or not. In fact, it was because we were located three minutes from a subway station and that was very important for them. So, we have been very popular!

I remember one moment when we were eating with some Bulgarian travellers. They asked if we received a lot of travellers. The phone rang, and I answered that I was sorry but we already had Servas people. I hung up the phone and said, "See, that was a hosting request!" Later, it decreased a little, maybe because we were getting older.

### ***How did people contact you and how did it evolve?***

At that time, we were contacted by letter at least 8 days in advance, to have enough time to answer. But travellers were contacting 10 different people at the same time



and they forgot to tell us when they found another host. So, we reserved these dates for them, for nothing. That happened many times and that was difficult.

Later, people always called instead of sending a letter. They called as soon as they arrived in Paris, for a stay starting the next day. Basically, that was better, we could accept or not, immediately. And now, it has changed again. We press a few buttons and that's it! It's better, but we miss the phone contact. Hearing a voice gives me some information about people.

### ***Did some visitors surprise you?***

Not a long time after the iron curtain fell down, we hosted two Bulgarians. When they realized that we offered dinner, they asked if every France Servas host and elsewhere was doing the same. We said yes. Dinner is an interesting moment; it's easier to exchange during meals. They were going to Spain next. They asked if we could keep their canned food for them and they would take it back later. When we asked them why they brought these cans, they told us that they thought they must bring food to be sure not to go hungry. What a difference between countries!

### ***What are some differences in the hosting practices?***

In Japan, it was the Servas president who organized the hosting. In 1980 and even before, in Japan, we didn't need to ask for the host list and organize the stay ourselves. We needed hosts in several different cities. Also, after an eight-day conference, we decided to stay another 2 weeks. The president made very good choices for us.



Thanks Laurent Lugand, coordinator of the region Ile-de-France, who took these photos.

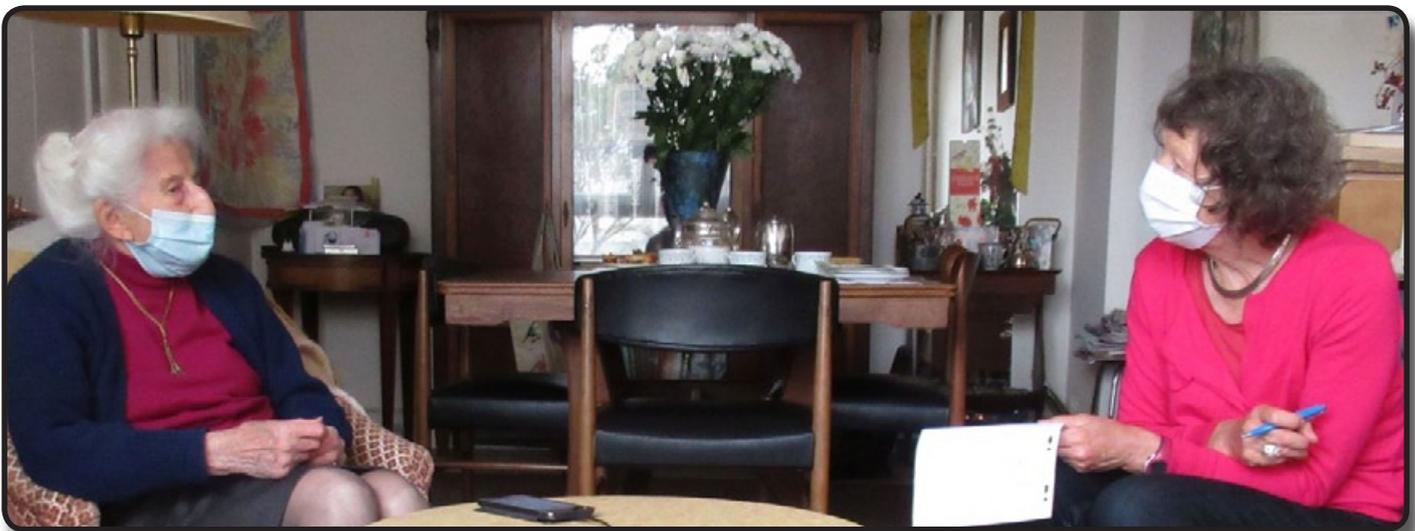
## Being an interviewer

### *Tell me about your interviewer experience*

I have been an interviewer for a pretty long time with Basile. It's a very interesting part of the Servas organization. We were always asked questions: "Why am I in Servas? What must we transmit to other people? What is important for us to say?" Psychologically too, it's interesting. Our fear was having to turn people down. It's rather awkward. The people we interviewed were not expecting a quarter of what was waiting for them with Servas. They were surprised by all the information we gave them.



*Thanks to Canadian Martine Côté (above) who translated French into English.*



I like to learn just enough of any language to be annoying.

# Meet The **T E C H T E A M** Members

By Jim Leask & Paul Nielsen, SI MTS

The Servas technical infrastructure is maintained, managed and developed by several groups providing a platform that can evolve to meet the needs of the future. Many of the team members participate in multiple groups.

## Joseph Lestang

Born in 1946, a Servas France member. A retired chemical engineer, then handicrafts importer from South East Asia. He was helping French members at the launch of servas.org in France, then joined the ServasOnLine team in Seoul in 2018.

*“Working with Claudia, we are helping countries to be on servas.org. I also do the translation work for French, Spanish and Italian with the help of other members.”*



## Mark Hahn

Born in 1966, systems administrator/analyst with Compute Canada. He grew up in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. With ServasOnline, Mark has for about twenty years managed the servers and backend infrastructure that keep everything working.



## Jim Leask

Jim and his wife Andrea joined Servas while on a world trip in 1988. Jim is a retired software engineer with experience architecting and building business and mobile applications. He built and ran the Gastiganto hosting database for Canada for 20+ years until the data was moved to ServasOnline. Jim is now active with all of the technical teams (ServasOnline, Design/Development, and ICT). He has recently joined SI EXCO as Co-Membership & Technology Secretary.

*“I am enjoying working with others to help strengthen Servas for the new online and mobile world we find ourselves in. The relationships we build together can make a difference to the world.”*



## Paul Nielsen

Born in 1962 and married to Vicki.

*“I really like Servas people. I am an IT generalist and am the Membership Officer for Servas Australia and the Co-MTS with Jim Leask in Servas International. I am very involved with all aspects of ServasOnline and its development. At home we have two Labradors (our fur children) who love Servas visitors.”*



**Dagmar**

Advocate for data quality, security, and structures. A Servas member since 1993, she has been active in German Servas IT team since 2017 and soon after in the international team.

*“I like to bake, especially cookies together with my Japanese Servas visitors,\* to cycle, and since the coronavirus I like Twitter.”*



**Steve Gaarder**

Born in 1953, he grew up in the Washington, DC, suburbs, with the exception of two years in Vienna between 1967 and 1969.

*“Living one hour away from the ‘Iron Curtain’ gave me a passion for overcoming the barriers between peoples. I now live with my wife Suzanne in Ithaca, NY, USA, where I helped found **EcoVillage**, an intentional community [a planned residential community with a high degree of social cohesion]. We have two children and three grandchildren. We joined Servas in 2018 and travelled for most of a year, meeting many wonderful people. I am active in the tech team for both Servas International and US Servas.”*



**Claudia Sagie**

Born in 1950 in Israel, she is a retired IT multinational project manager and currently national main contact for Servas Israel. Very involved along with Joseph Lestang in helping Servas Groups start to use ServasOnline. Interests include trips in Israel (in a 4X4) and abroad, music, photography, concerts, filming, cooking, and meeting friends.

*“We have three adult children, seven grandchildren. We participate in social groups—cinema, gourmet cooking.”*



**Peter Mair**

*“As a Servas member I implemented the migration of Servas Germany member data from Whale4Servas.org to Servas Online. Now I am active with ServasOnline helping with the data design and migration.”*



### Judy Bartel

Servas member since the mid-1980s and active in Servas Canada administration for several years. Responsible for the initial implementation of ServasOnline in Canada, she coordinated the ServasOnline Users Group and was active in the ServasOnline development team for several years. Judy currently responds to enquiries to the ServasOnline helpdesk. Living in Brandon, Canada, she enjoys travel, hosting, outdoor activities, and designing and producing handbags to raise funds for small-scale charities.



### Bernard Andrieu

Born in 1953, he is a retired project manager and has been the ServasOnline Version 1 Project Manager for seven years.

*“For years my wife and I have hosted many people from worldwide: it is always rewarding. We both rapidly committed to the Servas management; Marité in the French Board and I in ServasOnline. We put all our energy into the project, convinced that the future of Servas depended on it. We are pleased with the success of the project. Now it is time to rest and take care of our four grand-daughters.”*



### Eliza Iacoblev

Located in France, Eliza has been a web developer since 2001, she's specialized in PHP, MySQL and CMSs such as Wordpress and Drupal. She's also a web designer.



## The SI Tech Teams – and What They Do

Servas has a significant technical infrastructure that is managed by several groups, each with a different focus. Many tech team members participate in multiple groups.

**ServasOnline Team** – Has made ServasOnline Version 1 what it is today. The team's work includes:

- Added features and functions to make ServasOnline work as required (in production today)
- Helped and supported members groups to bring their data into and to start using ServasOnline.
- ServasOnline is in five languages due to the work of the Translation sub team.
- Identifies areas that could be improved in how Servas works and makes recommendations to EXCO.

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## **ServasOnline Design Team**

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ServasOnline version 1 has been difficult to maintain and further develop, and a fresh build is needed. This is ServasOnline version 2. This team:

- Has completed design work for V2.
- Identifies key changes to improve the usability of ServasOnline for members.
- Improved Servas processes and workflows.
- Developed a data model that aims to meet most requirements.
- Creating a user interface design that is easy to use on computers & other devices.

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## **ICT Team**

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This team works behind the scenes to establish, update and maintain all the software and hardware that keeps Servas working.

Maintains and update servers and services:

- Drupal Content Management System
- Jira issue tracking and project management.
- GIT source code version control.
- Design and Create a Development Platform (VMs) for ServasOnline Developers
- www.servas.org website
- ServasOnline international member database
- Dolphin Key List Database and Host List Repository
- NextCloud document sharing repository
- Email servers (servas.org emails)
- Confluence online collaborative document repository
- Development tools.

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## **Development Team**

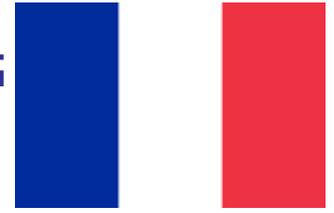
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This team consists of two French professional web developers (Eliza Iacoblev, Cyprien Roudet) and a small group of volunteers from the ServasOnline team.

The development work involves:

- Drupal development using modules and PHP coding
- Data design
- Data migration
- Translations
- Drupal module evaluations
- User Interface (UX) design
- Investigating and recommending technical approaches to implement key technologies, such as:
  - Capabilities to manage permissions for data access
  - Searching
  - Mapping and geolocation of hosts.

## Servas France Votes for Single National Fee



By Isabelle Girard, Servas France Vice President and  
Erick Lefort, Servas France National Secretary & President

**S**ervas France organized its 2020 General Assembly virtually and proposed an online vote. The members voted in November. French members voted 97.62 per cent for a single monetary contribution per year.

This is an important step for Servas France. Previously, in the old system, there was a national fee of 13 Euros per member. Travellers had to pay an additional 17 Euros for the international stamp.

Since the vote in November 2020 this new fee is 19 Euros per member for 2021. Young adults pay 9 Euros, from the age of 18 until their 26th birthday. Our treasurer set it as low as possible. The 19 Euros fee is the maximum contribution expected to be paid to Servas International with the future SI funding model, we hope!

This single contribution will simplify all Servas France procedures for members, for regional coordinators and for the treasurer. When members travel, they will still need to have a letter of introduction (LOI) validated by their coordinator, who will issue an e-stamp without any additional fee.

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Isabelle Girard and Erick Lefort

One  
Fee  
for  
all:

19

Euros.

# 15,959 MEMBER PROFILES IN SERVASONLINE

**By Jonny Sågänger, SI President,  
and Joseph Lestang, SI Tech Team**

On November 16 2020, there were 15,959 member profiles in the ServasOnline System, the global Servas International (SI) membership administration system.

There are ongoing activities to integrate the non-integrated countries in servas.org:

\* SI Tech Team members are working closely with Ewa Dzierzawska and Fidèle Rutayisire from the SI Development Committee.

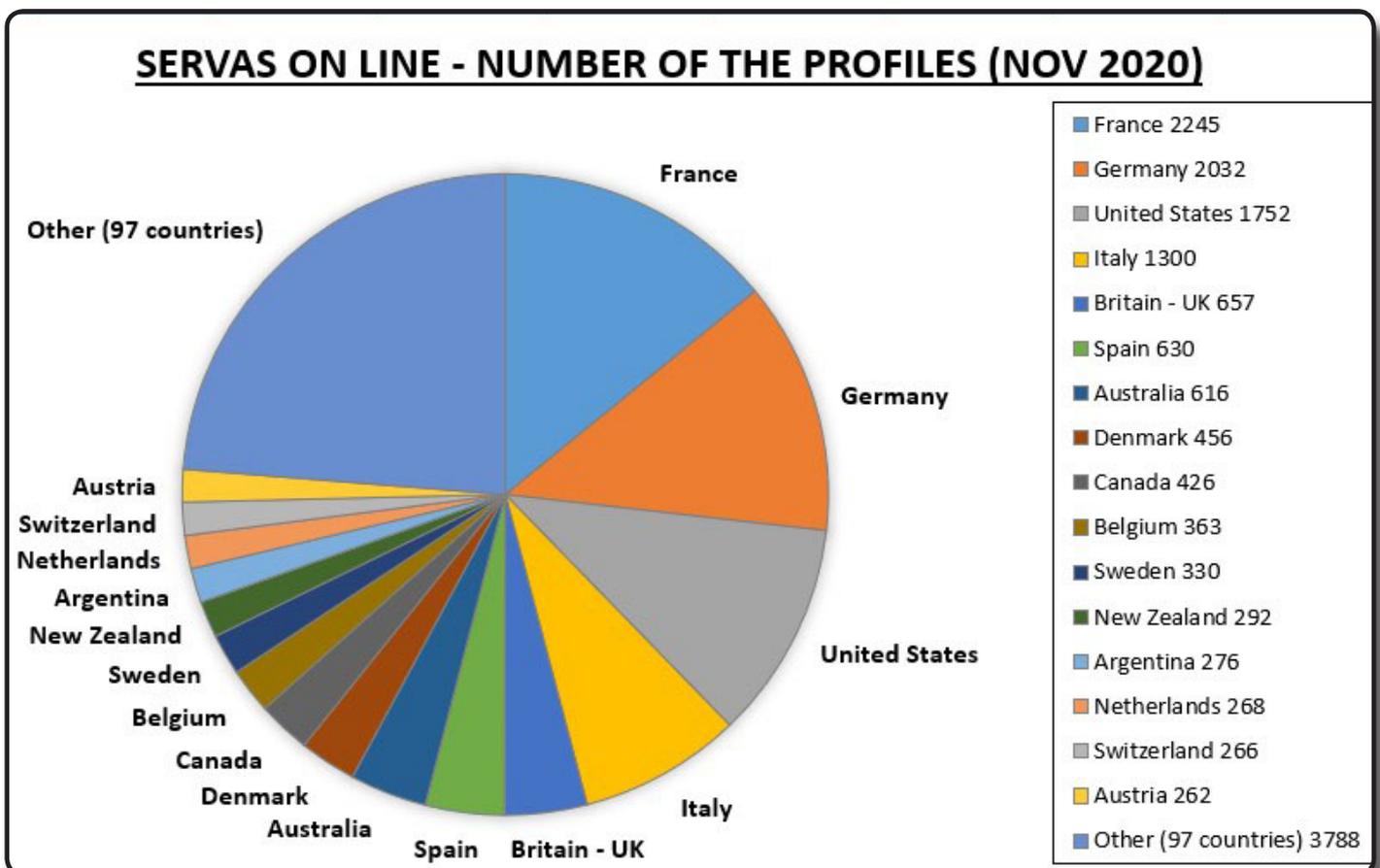
The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown in many countries make it more difficult to update the lists of members to put on servas.org. Some examples:

Servas Morocco had planned to have a meeting in October to explain and get agreement from their members. But no meeting could take place.

A member who can help re-form a Sri Lankan group is blocked in France and cannot return home.

The SI Tech Teams are currently working with Senegal, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Morocco. Joseph Lestang started to work with Pakistan several months ago but nothing yet has come out of the cooperation.

Chart 1: November 16 2020: 15,959 member profiles in the ServasOnline System



Poland, which has 320 household profiles on Dolphin and only 163 profiles on servas.org, is in the process of updating its membership list.

The figures in the boxes beside this text are updated continuously by the SI Tech Teams.

On July 24 2016 Servas France became the first Servas country and member group to successfully transfer their members' data to the ServasOnline System. No Servas country or member group has made a formal objection against joining the system.

Chart 2: It's comforting to see we have countries with over 2,000 members.

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| France               | 2245  |
| Germany              | 2032  |
| United States        | 1752  |
| Italy                | 1300  |
| Britain - UK         | 657   |
| Spain                | 630   |
| Australia            | 616   |
| Denmark              | 456   |
| Canada               | 426   |
| Belgium              | 363   |
| Sweden               | 330   |
| New Zealand          | 292   |
| Argentina            | 276   |
| Netherlands          | 268   |
| Switzerland          | 266   |
| Austria              | 262   |
| Other (97 countries) | 3788  |
|                      | 15959 |

## Servas **USA** initiative for Global Online Meetings

The US Servas Events Team would like to hear from Servas members for the purpose of gathering event ideas that are of interest to members and volunteers worldwide.

If you have ideas or would like to facilitate an event, please contact us at [events@usservas.org](mailto:events@usservas.org). We will not be able to produce every single idea that is sent to us but we will collect them into an article with suggestions, and we will help people who want to organize and make their specific events possible.

Andrea Veltman

US Servas Board-Designated Volunteer Coordinator

Events Team

[events@usservas.org](mailto:events@usservas.org)

**Editor's Note: US Servas has several happenings such as a request for short videos of how members are doing this year. See: <https://usservas.org/newsletters>.**

**US Servas also has t-shirts available for order, organized by the US Servas youth, to raise funds to bring youth to the next GA (when it happens). <https://www.bonfire.com/store/servas-t-shirts/>**



## Seeds of Servas Launches in Portuguese

By Neuma Dantas, National Secretary of Servas Brasil

In the first part of the acknowledgments, Bob Luitweiler talks of the process of creating his book *Seeds of Servas*: “the pages grew—often painfully—into a book,” comparing the creation of Servas to human birth. For fifty years, through many nine-month cycles Bob generated the enriching experiences that he passes on to us in his reports.

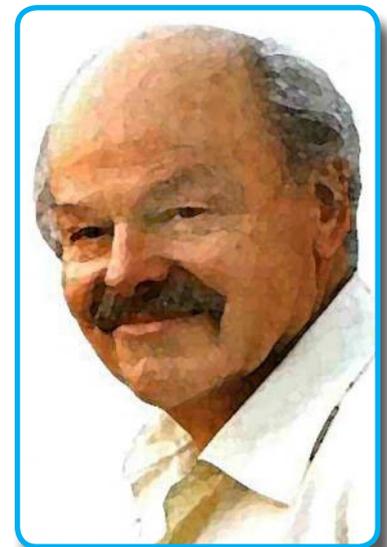
In her book *A Hora da Estrela (The Hour of the Star)*, respected Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector stated that “it is not easy to write. It is as hard as breaking rocks.” *Seeds of Servas* shows us who this conscientious objector was.



He wrote: “Call it a pilgrimage into the human soul ... My temple was the world; my companions the human family; my bible the sermons of the lives of people from all social strata.” Bob opened his own mental doors to let peace and affection enter. He loved his neighbour as himself. He visited different and marginalized populations worldwide. He admitted that while he was learning, he listened “with empathy, as the humblest people from far corners of the world became” his mentors.

A true leader, Bob shared his mentoring because he realized the value of diversity. His account became history, through the stories of those he met on the road.

The book, now translated into Portuguese, allows a greater reach into Portuguese-speaking communities.



Bob Luitweiler

With 244 million Portuguese speakers, the language will be considered by the UN the third most spoken in the world.\* This may give the language of Camões [Portugal’s great poet and dramatist] a deserved seat at the table of the Servas nations.



Let's add a Portuguese tab in the text translations on the Servas International website. Thanks to Servas Portugal's Carla Kristensen, Vice President of SI Exco, Servas International's global board, for her commitment to give our native language a deserved place in Servas.

The project coordinators, Carla and Alvany, make clear that in this translation, characteristic language variants of Portugal and Brazil stand out. I hope this builds linguistic bridges between our sister countries.

May Bob receive, in his heavenly glory, our message of love and gratitude for the lessons he taught. There is no doubt that the book has become a powerful story of our beginnings, as he had hoped.



Carla Kristensen



## Luís Vaz de Camões

While Portugal's poet **Luís Vaz de Camões** may not be as famous as Shakespeare, he led perhaps a more interesting life of love and legal problems.

**Some points from Wikipedia:** It was rumoured that he fell in love with the sister of **John III of Portugal** and was exiled from Lisbon in 1548. He enlisted in the overseas militia, and in a battle with the **Moors**, he lost the sight in his right eye. During the religious festival of **Corpus Christi**, he injured a member of the Royal Stables and was forced to serve three years in the militia in the Orient.

In Goa, Camões was imprisoned for debt. He was **shipwrecked in Cambodia**, saved his manuscript but lost his Chinese lover, Dinamene.

The day of his death, 10 June, is **Portugal's national day**. He is entombed near **Vasco da Gama**, in Lisbon.

Statue in Goa India shows the wide respect for this poet. Another statue is in Havana, Cuba. **Camões** wrote in Spanish also.

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## Let's Talk: New Masculinities — How to Prevent Gender Discrimination

Juergen Wildner, Servas Italy member and vice regional coordinator for region Emilia-Romagna is launching an initiative to create a Servas discussion forum by email, online and face-to-face meetings about the question of violence in everyday life.

The problem was especially highlighted during the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November).

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/ending-violence-against-women-day>

Juergen writes:

I think it is a big and important worldwide problem and very close to Servas ideas of friendship and peace. I think especially men need to reflect and change their opinions. So let us use our association for better understanding of gender questions.

Let's meet and talk for better understanding between all of us.

Can men also talk about their feelings, emotions and problems?

### Discussion points:

What is a man's role at home and outside home, in working life, in society, in education, in sexuality? What about roles in the family? Fathers spending time with children, dedicating time and enthusiasm, fun and sadness with children, and fathers caring for old people, children....Is caring only a job for women?

It is a man's job to defend the honour of his family? Men as fighters, supermen, powerful men; are men allowed to be sad, to cry? Violence in the family. What makes you angry? What is painful for you?

Gender equality at home: whose job is it to repair, clean, cook, wash, shop?

Women working outside the home? Women getting more money for their job than men?

What are the differences in your home country, in our minds, in our education?

What are our models and good examples of a: father, husband, grandfather; a mother, wife and grandmother; a son, a daughter, et cetera?

Does trauma influence our behaviour?

What are our aims in everyday life? Where you are from? Where do you feel at home? Education for girls and boys? Clothes traditions, religious aspects of your understanding in society? Marriage and sexuality? Drugs and money? Difficult and painful adventures in our life?

In this initiative I'm hoping for participation of all people: male, female, and those not identifying as either. Are you interested? Please contact me!

Juergen Wildner, [wildner.buono@gmail.com](mailto:wildner.buono@gmail.com)

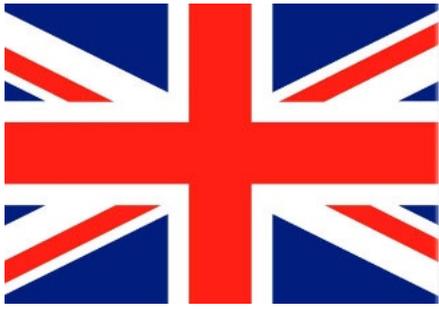
**Servas** Italy, **Region:** Emilia-Romagna, **City:** Reggio Emilia

**Languages:** German, Italian, English

**Interests:** Music, yoga, theatre, cinema, meditation



Juergen Wildner, Servas Italy



## Positive Response to British Refugee Project

By Giles Waley, of Kippen, Scotland, Servas Britain member

Following enthusiastic interest from Servas Britain members, a sub-group of four was formed to take this scheme forward. All Servas Britain members were invited to register if they were interested in receiving visits from refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. About sixty households responded positively.

There have been a few visits of families to Servas hosts but these have now been suspended due to coronavirus restrictions. The general experience has been very successful. In each case the Servas member who knows the refugee family has made the practical arrangements. Servas Britain has found hosts suitable for the particular visitors and provided money for travel costs and other expenses.

In addition to this hospitality scheme, Servas Britain has provided some financial support to local organizations that Servas Britain members belong to and that carry out humanitarian work in support of refugees and asylum seekers.

It is necessary for the organization to show that the funds will be used in a way that is consistent with the values and spirit of Servas, and the money has to be used only for this purpose.

We have set a maximum figure for this type of funding application. The total budget allowed by Servas Britain for the costs mentioned above is 3,000 British pounds (GBP) in one year.



Ali, a Turkish asylum-seeker, visiting Servas couple Jane and Paddy in the Lake District beside the Peace Pole at Oxenholme.

## Geneva Peace Week 2020

By Jeanne Devine and Kent Macaulay  
 Servas International Representatives to the UN in New York

Thanks to modern technology, Servas members occasionally have the opportunity to attend virtual UN meetings in New York, Geneva and Vienna. During the week of Nov. 2-6, some of Servas International Representatives to the UN attended online sessions of Geneva Peace Week 2020. This is an annual event of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform ([www.gpplatform.ch](http://www.gpplatform.ch)) in collaboration with the UN Office in Geneva and other agencies. The focus this year was “Rebuilding trust after disruption: Pathways to reset international cooperation”. It aimed to “galvanize leadership, build trust and contribute to transforming international cooperation in the wake of COVID-19”.

Geneva Peace Week featured wide-ranging topics and inspiring discussion about peacebuilding in today’s world. You can see over seventy videos and podcasts of the sessions for free on YouTube by going to [www.eu.eventscloud.com/website/3030/digital-series/](http://www.eu.eventscloud.com/website/3030/digital-series/). (Copy this link and paste into a new window. Within this link, click on **Go to our Youtube Channel**. Select a topic, then select a session from top right side.)



Kent Macaulay



Majid Adin’s illustration for *A Recipe for Peace*

poem *A Recipe for Peace*. It was written collectively by 25 Geneva Peace Week participants from across the world and was illustrated live by award-winning artist Majid Adin. You can view it at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKDdPvzjRH4&t=1s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKDdPvzjRH4&t=1s).

• • •

Geneva Peace Week is a demonstration of how the UN, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), businesses, academia and governments can collaborate in peacebuilding. Every voice is important in creating a just and peaceful world, and people of all ages, backgrounds and countries participated in this impressive and inspiring event.

Geneva Peace Week ended with the beautiful

# Face-to-Face and Online Meetings

## Why Are Online Tools Useful?

In nature there are many cyclical processes and events, one of them being pandemics. During 2020 we have had to live through a pandemic, anticipated by science years ago, which has changed our ordinary life due to the reduction or cancellation of face-to-face activities. Many organizations, business and social, have begun to use internet or online tools to communicate—at first, hesitantly, later, on a large scale.

The people who coordinate Servas Spain are using online tools to comply with our legal obligations and to fulfill the need to interact with our partners.

These tools are not the definitive solution, but they have a role in a global world that needs quick reactions (or actions) and where we cannot move or it is difficult to do so. They have obvious advantages that must be made use of and enhanced, as well as disadvantages that we must learn to overcome, suppress or reduce to achieve the objective. This is not as an end in themselves but as a means to develop our association's mission.

The face-to-face world has great capacity for reaching agreements, using trust, emotion, attention, listening, personal contact. It works when the groups are small, known or local, and motivation is strong.

However, this form of contact has loose ends that we cannot lessen and they may even tend to make us lose focus—too many people, egos, long-drawn out time frame, lower and lower attendance, clashes that lead to disruptions, cost (for the Annual Assembly between 15 and 20,000 euros). The online world has obvious advantages (reducing distance, resources, time, added flexibility) that may conceal very strong challenges. However, these are easily solvable by knowing the key elements: preparation, testing, assigning tasks, concise topics, clear objectives. A possible summary could be the following idea: the results of online and face-to-face work and meetings are the direct responsibility of the people who organize them, taking full advantage of the channel used (maximizing its strengths and reducing or eliminating the weak areas).

|                                                                          | <b>Face-to-face</b> | <b>Internet</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Possibility of creating chemistry                                        | Very good           | Improvable      |
| Later informal conversations to iron out differences                     | Very good           | Bad             |
| Combine leisure and work                                                 | Very good           | Bad             |
| Pre-work: reflections, brainstorming, pre-script                         | Similar             | Similar         |
| Previous preparation to ensure an adequate result                        | Improvable          | Improvable      |
| The structure helps to enhance results                                   | Improvable          | Very good       |
| The distribution of tasks gets more people involved                      | Improvable          | Very good       |
| Possibility of controlling deviations from the agenda during the meeting | Improvable          | Very good       |
| Possibility of having more single-theme meetings                         | Bad                 | Very good       |
| Take advantage of resources: logistics, time, attention, deadlines       | Very bad            | Very good       |
| Managing egos, endless debates and people leaving early before the end   | Very bad            | Very good       |

### **Organizing the 2020 Annual Assembly**

Our 2020 Servas Spain Annual Assembly lasted 2.5 hours and was prepared by about six people. Sixty people signed up, although finally about fifty took part.

#### **1. Points to take into account**

- a. People are used to face-to-face meetings and that must be taken into account and respected.
- b. Resources are scarce whether we like it or not. Duration, attention span.
- c. Egos tend to expand, inadvertently. You have to give it its space. If this is not done in an organized way, it will appear where we least expect it.

#### **2. “Physical” tools**

Use basic professional versions of video-conferencing software, which are affordable (50-100-200 euros), even if only for a specific meeting. We use Zoom.

- a. Ask for a cable connection instead of Wi-Fi. As we have notified in several previous meetings, if individuals have connection problems, the responsibility lay with them.
- b. Ask the participants to use headphones to avoid sound feedback. Zoom worked very well and we also muted all the microphones except for the person who was speaking and who was coordinating the meeting.
- c. Request people to use a computer instead of tablets or mobiles. Although theoretically they should work the same, the interfaces are different.

### 3. Before the meeting

Two notification emails: the first with the date and time and a registration form to calculate the number of attendees, and the second with a weblink, detailing the necessary information: content, technical requirements...

a. Hold at least two meetings beforehand with the participants and the organizers. Having a similar meeting structure, content and duration solves technical problems that may come up, and so avoid having to do it during the assembly.

b. Hold at least two test meetings with the people organizing, so that they work out the running order, the aims and can make it work. These run-throughs cover presentations, meeting management, technical support, backup support in case of an incident, chat, observation of the general atmosphere, test participants, minutes.

c. Online presentation: comment, reduce and polish with the organizers. One idea per screen, with basic points, who presents it, and if there is a vote.

d. Check visits to the web using Google Analytics.

### 4. At the meeting

Time the first call for 30 minutes before the second call (the actual start time ). With video and open microphones greet, speak and solve technical questions.

a. Second call timed for 30 minutes after the first. Start promptly, once it has been verified that there is a sufficient quorum.

b. Explain again the technical issues to prevent issues. Open microphones.

c. Share presentations on screen, with the person who is presenting superimposed.

d. To avoid monotony, several people present. If someone is presenting several screens, let them present the screens altogether. Each speaker introduces himself/herself. Indications on the screen show who is presenting, key ideas, if there are votes.

f. At the end of each topic, a small space for quick queries, without entering into debate.

g. At the end of the meeting, allow about 20-30 minutes for consultations or feedback.

h. Feedback through an online form by email and web.

### 5. After the meeting

The same afternoon or a day or two later:

a. Send an email to the participants, thanking them for their collaboration and patience. Send them a weblink to where the presentations and the documents will be shown.

b. Thank all the people involved in the organizing and development. Everything is a team effort, therefore all contributions are essential.

c. Meeting of the association's core group or of the meeting, to give feedback, analysis and assessment. With constructive criticism, everything can be improved and we have all made our best possible contribution.

d. Come up with an outline, on the spot, of what the next meeting of this type would be like.

e. Hold regular meetings, both with the organizers and with the association.

- Without making decisions (they complicate development a lot). They are for small groups and with very considerable work beforehand.

- For information or training, so that the result is pleasant and positive.

- Single topics, to avoid overload in the agenda.

- Be brief. From 30 to 60 minutes; maximum 90 minutes, and an absolute maximum of 120 minutes. Tiredness and boredom begin to appear after 60 minutes, are evident at 90 and people begin to drop out around this point.

## 6. Other techniques

The online world and the face-to-face world are only channels for dialogue and listening. To enhance results other dialogue techniques should be used: nonviolent communication, conversation segmentation, active listening, group dynamics and, in general, tools for creating collective intelligence. These allow more and better creativity, participation, dialogue, reflection, time management, reducing polarization, focus on project, selection and decisions.

## 7. Conclusions

Both society and our association have very urgent and important needs. The internet and online tools provide us with high-level advantages that it is imperative to take advantage of, without overlooking the fact that we are people and we have our needs to communicate, enjoy and have a sense of usefulness and belonging.

Remembering Picasso: "Inspiration does exist, but it must find you working".

The key to using online tools (and face-to-face ones) is in the preparation:

- The structure, format and management of the meeting.

- The content where creativity and previous analysis can be contributed.

Trial and error, trial runs and more trial runs show us the advantages and the pitfalls. Each time better, or at least with more capacity; without losing sight of the objective: creating peace and dialogue through contact and travel.

We hope our experience is useful to you. Thanks for your time and attention. Greetings to one and all.

Servas Spain

Coordination Team

## Host Expectations

### Responding, even with a “No” is needed

By Tys Sniffen, Servas USA member

All seasoned Servas travelers have amazing stories of connections and friendships made through our great organization. But we also have the disappointing stories—dreaming up a trip, learning about the culture, researching interesting off-the-path areas of some foreign land, and sometimes, the most fun part, reading through the host list to find unique people to contact to see if we can enjoy some time together. And then... no response. After sending specific, heart-felt detailed greetings and requests or even sending many simple, pleasant requests, there's no answer. It seems like a breakdown of the entire idea and purpose of Servas.

It seems that every traveler has had this negative experience. As an organization that is challenged for members in the best of times, we need to remind ourselves of the importance of keeping up our end of the agreement as hosts.

If we as hosts don't keep up our profile information - both on [www.servas.org](http://www.servas.org) and with our local and national organizations—and don't quickly respond when we get hosting requests, there really is no Servas.

Sometimes hosts can receive requests that may seem a little rude, or obtuse. Here in the woods of giant California, sometimes we'll get a request along the lines of “we land in Los Angeles on Wednesday, and need to be in Yosemite by Saturday, can we come stay with you?”. From this it is obvious people don't understand there are often 15 hours of driving between these three points of interest. Sometimes you can easily tell that the traveler has created a “form letter” and is sending it out to many people. Sometimes travelers will want to bend the rules before even meeting: “Our plane lands at midnight and we need to leave the next day...” Still though, as hosts, we need to respond—always with patience, kindness, and ideally with flexibility.

Yes, we always need to respond! But of course, we do not always need to respond positively. It is completely acceptable to say “not at this time”. A negative response is *much better* than no response at all. After discussion on social media, it seems that most of us around the world agree that responding—with a yes or a no—within 24 hours is a reasonable expectation.\*



Photo by Andrew Grosine from Burst

So, all hosts, please:

**Right now**, go and check your profile on *all* Servas platforms.

Go to [www.servas.org](http://www.servas.org) and click on “My Servas” and log in. On the top menu, under ‘My Servas’, click on ‘my profile’ and check all the information. Edit as needed.

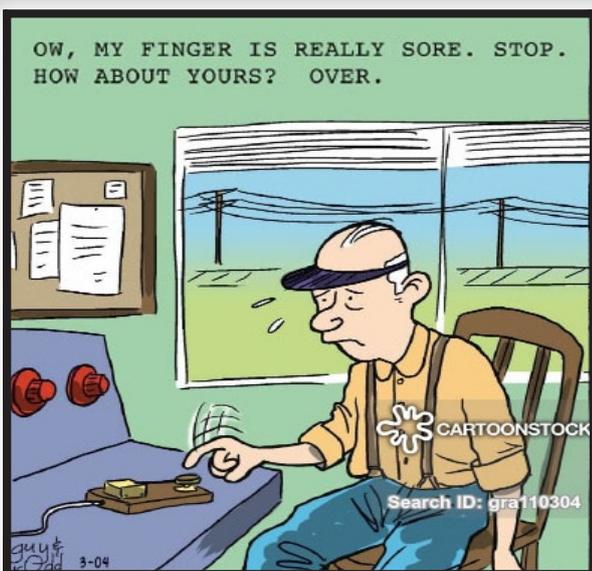
Also please check the email address you have with Servas. Sometimes, people create unique email addresses for different things—like having servasTys@gmail rather than just using one email for everything—and then forget to check the account, thereby making it hard to connect in a timely manner. Please use a primary email address with your Servas contacts. Servas will not send you frivolous emails.

If email is not your primary choice of communication, please be sure to include the best way to contact you with specific instructions...e.g, if you use Whatsapp, please indicate times you are open to calls or texts.

Recommit to responding to any Servas email in under 24 hours. We all deserve the courtesy of timely responses as we work together to build cultural understanding and make friends. As always, you can say ‘no’, but a negative response is 100% better than no response at all.



Photo by Matthew Henry from Burst



*\*Editor’s Note:*

*In some countries members told me that relying on email to reach hosts is a mistake. Email for some is as outdated as sending a telegram, a letter, or a fax. Some places are using Whatsapp, Viper, or Twitter, etc. In 2018, I emailed, then phoned, then used Whatsapp to try to find Servas hosts in one popular European city. Each day I chose three more hosts until I had tried 35 hosts. I found only one host.*

...

# New Servas Key People

## Servas USA

On November 8, 2020 Servas USA elected a new Board.

### This is the US Board of Directors:

- David Schwartz, Board Chair
- Marguerite Hills, Vice Chair
- Joanne Ferguson Cavanaugh, Secretary
- Barbara Pioli, Board member
- Radha Radhakrishna, Board member
- Arnie Rowland, Board member
- Lena Desai, Board Member
- Paige LaCombe, Board member



US Servas Office Administrator is Shelley Mitchell.

Outgoing Board Members, ex officios: Chris-Ann Lauria, Chair Emeritus; Steve Kanters, Treasurer; Yosi McIntire, National Peace & Social Justice Secretary.



David Schwartz



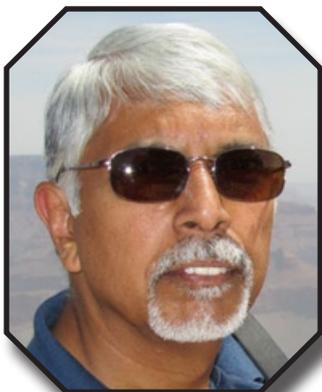
Marguerite Hills



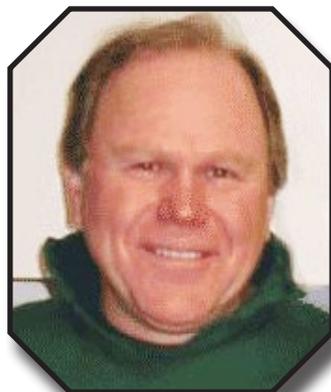
Joanne Ferguson Cavanaugh



Barbara Pioli



Radha Radhakrishna



Arnie Rowland



Lena Desai



Paige LaCombe

## SI Conflict and Resolution Team

The team has recently been reorganized. The current members are:



Dot Fine, Ireland



Alvany Santiago, Brazil



Abhay Shaha, India

Outgoing team members: Marijke Batenburg and Belinda Baird, New Zealand; Martin Henner, USA. Thanks to the former board and team members for the energy and the time spent on the development of Servas. We congratulate and warmly welcome all new key people, and wish you the best of luck in your new role.

Rita Dessauvage, SI Dolphin Team, Member of Servas Belgium & Luxemburg



### Servas Canada Donates 2021 Fees to SI



**T**he Board of Servas Canada decided to donate to Servas International, SI, all membership fees for the 2021 year. This amount is in addition to the annual fee that Servas Canada will pay to SI in February 2021 as per the agreement at SICOGA 2018. The Board recognizes that, with COVID-19 having decimated revenue from travellers' fees, many developing countries and countries which had not implemented membership fees prior to the pandemic may not be able to pay their annual SI fees in full. Servas Canada's donation is to help SI cover any shortfall.

Servas Canada's plan is to make three payments to Servas International in 2021, as follows:

1. January: All their 2021 membership fees collected by Dec. 31, 2020 (~Cdn. \$4,000).
2. February: Servas Canada's annual fee as per the SICOGA 2018 agreement.
3. July 2021: Remaining Servas Canada's 2021 membership fees collected later.

When the Servas Canada Board told its members of the plan to forward their 2021 fees to SI, it received several responses of encouragement to do so.

According to a letter from Kent Macaulay, (Servas Canada's SI Liaison): the Board is "extremely pleased to be able to offer this financial assistance during this challenging time".

—Jonny Sägänger, SI President

# Membership

**EXPIRED?**



## **Dear Servas National Secretaries/Presidents,**

Greetings to you! I hope this email finds you safe and healthy.

I write to you today about a couple of membership and Servas Online questions. US Servas is writing its policy for managing the profiles of expired members in Servas Online. So first, I am wondering how other national groups are managing expired members during the pandemic and how you will manage them once traveling and hosting resume.

I heard that one country was giving expired members a year-long grace period. Another country was giving a grace period of a few months. I wonder what other national groups are doing and what you took into consideration when you made your decision.

Second, are there any other national groups who have a “basic” membership category for individuals who want to be part of the organization but have never traveled or hosted, and never plan to travel or host? If so, do you interview these individuals also? Or do you omit the interview, and not give them access to Servas Online?



Your feedback is much appreciated!

Warmest regards,

Chris-Ann Lauria,

Emeritus Board Chair, US Servas

[Calauria21@aol.com](mailto:Calauria21@aol.com) 1-262-364-8970

<https://usservas.org>



## Anti-Black Racism in America

By Yosi McIntire, US Servas Peace and Justice Committee

The United States is grappling with the contradiction between its lofty founding ideals and its violent history. More than 150 years after the end of the Civil War, the United States is still plagued by the legacy of anti-Black racism, and the nation has yet to reconcile this grave crime against humanity with the “self-evident truths” stated in its Declaration of Independence.

The economic prosperity of the United States was built on the forced labor of millions of enslaved Black people, and much of the contemporary inequality is a direct result of centuries of racial discrimination.

Efforts were made in the mid-1960s to abolish laws that kept segregation, Jim Crow and Black oppression in place, but the growth of white supremacy reveals that the mindset of many white Americans never correspondingly altered.

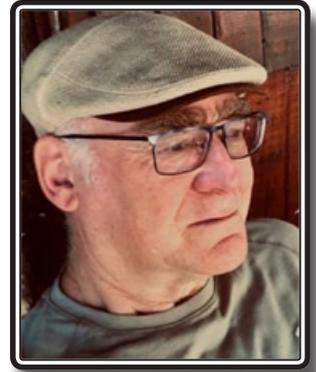
It would probably be fair to say that the bulk of the violence we are witnessing today has involved people who still consider whites superior, and who view this country as essentially undergoing a race war. For them, racism is a justifiable cultural condition. In their minds, they commit these violent acts to save the country, in particular to save the country for white people.

The current ongoing public protests against police killings of Black people have spread to every corner of the USA and around the world. However, increasingly violent counter-demonstrations and ongoing police brutality against Blacks reveal the depth of the oppression of people of African descent.

According to a recent [Amnesty International investigative report](#), US law enforcement has responded

to protests with shocking amounts of excessive force against protesters. This illustrates the disturbing lack of progress since the mid-1960s.

US Servas believes that we—as individuals and as an organization—are in a long overdue moment in which we need to address systemic, anti-Black racism in America. US Servas recognizes that Black people were introduced to this country as slaves to be exploited. We recognize that collective societal racism is wrapped in shame and denial. We stand with Amnesty International and try to move in solidarity with the Black community.



Yosi McIntire



Attribution: Jessica Lin



We hope that the current protests will impel society to examine, analyze, critique, and finally understand racist strategies so that we may start to put racism behind us.

Equal opportunity for housing, health care, education, financial resources, and social justice are extremely challenging for a society historically based on class, caste, and race.

“Abolitionists” envision a replacement of the police and prison systems with something more community-based.

“Reformists” suggest ways to modify racial attitudes and practices.

On the Congressional front, *The Breathe Act*, presented by the Electoral Justice Project of the [Movement for Black Lives \(M4BL\)](#), a coalition of more than 150 Black organizations across the United States, envisions divesting taxpayer dollars from “brutal and discriminatory policing” and instead investing in “a new vision of public safety—a vision that answers the call to defund the police and allows all communities to finally BREATHE free.”

In his New York Times best-seller, *How To Be An Antiracist*, Ibram X. Kendi addresses the urgent issues of race, justice, and equality by pointing us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other—and most importantly how each of us can play an active role in eradicating racism. He challenges us to think of racism as a spreading cancer and imagines what a world where “the trillions of tax dollars we spend on ... imprisoning people, bombing people, and putting troops in harm’s way” were used to serve humanity.

Justice is essential for Peace. Servas stands for both.

We need to fight hate and teach tolerance.



## SI INVITES VOLUNTEERS TO **VIRTUAL UN STATUS OF WOMEN EVENT**

Servas International, SI, is now accepting applications from individual members who would like to represent our organisation at the virtual event United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, UNCSW65, on March 15-25 2021.

SI has the right to designate up to 20 representatives at the virtual UNCSW65 event. The event's priority theme: Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.



UN Women is the [United Nations](#) entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

Priority registration will go to Servas International members as follows:

Current SI Reps (NY, Geneva, Vienna), SI EXCO members and SI UN Coordinator  
National Peace Secretaries and National Secretaries

All other Servas members who have submitted a Statement of Intent and Interest (based on availability of spaces allowed by UN).

Each representative must submit his/her own registration first to Servas International for approval. Once approved by SI, Representatives will be required to register online at INDICO, the UN site. Representatives must have a letter of approval from Servas International and a current LOI.

To apply, please fill out UNCSW65 Statement of Intent and Interest (see below), and return to [PeaceSecretary@servas.org](mailto:PeaceSecretary@servas.org)

For more information about the UNCSW65 go to <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

Servas International (SI) has since 1973 consultative status as an international non governmental organisation, iNGO, with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the United Nations. The consultative status makes it possible for SI to be active at the premises of the United Nations in New York City in USA, Geneva in Switzerland and Vienna in Austria.

**SERVAS INTERNATIONAL  
STATEMENT OF INTENT AND INTEREST TO ATTEND A UN-NY EVENT**

NAME OF EVENT : UNCSW65

LOCATION: This year UNCSW65 is a Virtual Event

DATES OF EVENT: March 15-25, 2021      DATE SUBMITTED: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Servas member of group/ country \_\_\_\_\_

Member since \_\_\_\_\_ Host \_\_\_\_\_ Traveler \_\_\_\_\_

Is your LOI active? \_\_\_\_\_ (It must be current by February 20, 2021)

Are you currently in a Servas role/Volunteer position? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you interested in attending this event? \_\_\_\_\_

What experience do you have about this topic? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any previous experience with UN events, NGOs or Non Profits? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you share your experience with Servas members in your country? \_\_\_\_\_

You will be required to submit a report of what you learned and suggestions for actions to the SI UN Coordinator within 3 months of the event. Acknowledge here: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information, sign up for the CSW newsletter <https://ngocsw.org/ngocsw65/#>

Please submit this application by date: January 20, 2021

Email to: [PeaceSecretary@servas.org](mailto:PeaceSecretary@servas.org) or [Paige.LaCombe@servas.org](mailto:Paige.LaCombe@servas.org)

We look forward to working with you!



**United Nations Commission on the Status of Women- UNCSW65**  
Virtual Event March 15-25, 2021



## **SERVAS, A GLOBAL COMMUNITY WITHIN VIRTUAL REACH**

**Discover the Servas community here on the world wide web:**

| Social Media                                                                                        | Location                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Administered by:                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Official website                                                                                    | <a href="https://servas.org/">https://servas.org/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Servas International                                                         |
| Facebook page                                                                                       | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Servas.International/">https://www.facebook.com/Servas.International/</a>                                                                                                                                             | Jonny Sågänger, Carla Kristensen                                             |
| Facebook group<br>“Servas International”                                                            | (members only) <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/117649068294944/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/117649068294944/</a>                                                                                                                          | Arnoud Philipppo, Paige LaCombe, Tawny Foskett                               |
| Servas group<br>“Travelling for Peace”                                                              | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/servas/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/servas/</a>                                                                                                                                                           | Jonny Sågänger, Carla Kristensen, Park Jae Kwoang                            |
| Servas Peace Page                                                                                   | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/ServasPeacePage/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/ServasPeacePage/</a>                                                                                                                                         | Paige LaCombe, Danielle Serres, Raleigh LaCombe Tomlinson, Francisco Salomón |
| Instagram                                                                                           | Ex: servasturkiye, servasmexico, servaspeaceschool, servasbritain, servaschile, servasbrasil, servaspeace, servas_australia, servasgiovani, servas_italia, servasiran, servasportugal, servasfrance, servasyouth, servas_youth_in_africa, and many more | Many Servas groups or teams                                                  |
| Twitter                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                              |
| Servas International president on <a href="https://twitter.com/servasinternational">twitter.com</a> | <a href="https://twitter.com/servasinternational">https://twitter.com/servasinternational</a>                                                                                                                                                           | SI President                                                                 |
| @ServasI                                                                                            | <a href="https://twitter.com/servasi">https://twitter.com/servasi</a>                                                                                                                                                                                   | Servas Britain Regional Co-ordinator, Area N (Yorkshire)                     |
| Blogs & national websites                                                                           | See “Servas Websites” at <a href="http://www.servas.org">www.servas.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                              |
| Digital Communication                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                              |
| SI News Bulletin                                                                                    | <a href="https://servas.org/en/newsletters-bulletins">https://servas.org/en/newsletters-bulletins</a>                                                                                                                                                   | SI President and the SI Media & Communication Team                           |
| Servas Confluence                                                                                   | A digital co-working and cooperation platform for internal Servas volunteers.                                                                                                                                                                           | SI Tech Team and SI Exco                                                     |

The SI News is sent in digital format to all National Secretaries and Key People, who distribute it to their country/group members. It is a quarterly publication and contains articles of interest such as communications from SI ExCo, stories of Servas experiences, articles about Peace, Servas and the UN.

—By Carla Cristensen (SI VP) & Jonny Sågänger (SI President)

## ABOUT THE SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NEWS BULLETIN

The Servas International News Bulletin (SI News Bulletin) is a newsletter from Servas International Executive Committee (SI Exco), which is the organization's global board. The SI News Bulletin contains a brief report about current issues and decisions.

### Editors & Newsletter Coordinators:

Jonny Sågänger, SI President [president@servas.org](mailto:president@servas.org)

Picot Cassidy, Servas Britain

Itzcóatl (Jorge) Rendon, Mexico

Graphic Design/Layout: Michael Johnson

What would you like to read about in the SI News Bulletin? Let us know.

Email: [president@servas.org](mailto:president@servas.org)

We encourage Servas key people around the world to forward this bulletin to individual members. Feel free to quote this bulletin but please mention Servas International News Bulletin as the source.

### SI EXCO 2018—2022

PRESIDENT:

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MEMBERSHIP & TECHNOLOGY SECRETARY:

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PEACE SECRETARY:

Paige LaCombe [peacesecretary@servas.org](mailto:peacesecretary@servas.org)



### ABOUT SERVAS INTERNATIONAL

Servas International is an international, non-profit, non-governmental federation of national Servas groups, supporting an international network of hosts and travellers. Our network aims to help build world peace, goodwill and understanding by offering opportunities for personal contacts between people of different cultures, backgrounds and nationalities.