

Welcome to our panel this morning. As you know, this panel introduces three reports that came out of the cultural diplomacy summits that took place across North America as part of a larger project, *The Cultural Relations Approach to Diplomacy: Practice, Players, Policy*. Today they also serve as an introduction to the research of the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, a multi-disciplinary partnership that includes academics, policymakers, and practitioners from North America and beyond. My name is Amy Parks, and as the lead Research Fellow of NACDI, my task today is to set out the main lines of our research project before turning things over to my co-presenters---all members of NACDI---Jeffrey Brison, Amanda Rodriguez Espinola, Cesar Villaneuva and Maria Montemayor de Teresa.

Our group's objective is to establish cultural diplomacy as a critical practice: by interrogating and advancing it, NACDI aims, specifically, to raise the profile of the Cultural Relations approach to Diplomacy to advance it as a valuable tool in fostering international and transcultural relations. Our research [group] aims to measure and mobilize this approach to diplomacy to inform public policy and to enable transcultural forms of conflict resolution.

Mitigating global cultural conflict is the most fundamental societal challenge of our times. Even a cursory glance at the day's events provides ample evidence that we're living in an increasingly adversarial moment—[SLD #1] a world of global terrorism and refugee crises, #2 Trump-era politics protests, repression, cultural insecurity #3 and what we now refer to as “crimes against heritage.” And, while mitigating cultural conflict through traditional diplomatic channels remains an urgent focus of governments, efforts are failing. They're failing not only because the re-emergent, polarizing forces of protectionism, xenophobia and extremism are complex issues that appear "incomprehensible and resistant to solution," but also because the practice of diplomacy itself has shifted. [SLD] The

building and management of global relations is no longer the exclusive domain of a privileged "club" of nation states [#2] as it was in the Cold War era—a club that set the agenda, dictated the policies, picked the players, [#3] and made the rules of the rules-based international order. We've moved past the era of the exclusively "international," state-based diplomacy that was institutionalized in 1961 with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. [SLD] Now, diplomacy takes place in a technologically and socially diverse, "networked" environment, based on horizontal communication, dialogue, and multidirectional flows of information. In this global era of networked diplomacy, states vie for authority with non-state actors, such as non-governmental and non-profit organizations, transnational institutions and activist groups: the so-called "new" diplomats. In effect, diplomacy based in state-centred practices and protocols has given way to diplomacy as an orientation—as a set of behaviors, dispositions, and attitudes within a broader spectrum of cultural relations.

The current, sustained moment of global crisis prompts the research question at the heart of the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative. We ask: what political work is needed to spur the behavioral changes necessary to mitigate global cultural conflict? To answer this question, we focus on the diplomatic work of institutions, policymakers, and professionals in the field of Cultural Relations. [SLD] We aim to interrogate this approach to diplomacy—one identified, not—as in Public Diplomacy on your left—with the immediate, short-term interests of states and their foreign policy goals, but rather—as you see on your right—with people-to-people relations, non-governmentalism and a long-term outlook. We ask how the Cultural Relations approach to diplomacy works, and through which agents, institutions, organizations, forms, and artifacts. In doing so, we want to generate scholarship that treats cultural diplomacy, not merely as part of the "soft

power” tool-kit of nation states, but as a multi-directional and potentially activist practice that encompasses a broad range of non-state actors, including cultural institutions, managers, practitioners, consumers, and communities seeking to imagine counter-hegemonic possibilities and inclusive futures.

The Goals of Our Project are threefold: [SLD #1... #2] Our primary objective is to establish cultural diplomacy as a *critical* practice. Our partnership aims to take it from an affirmative activity mobilizing a relatively unproblematic “culture” to a reflexive practice that engages fully with the scholarship and experience-based knowledge generated by those trained in what Australian scholar David Carter (2015) refers to as “critical culture.” Put another way, [#3] we aim to respond to increasing calls for analyses of cultural diplomacy informed by the methodologies and approaches of the cultural disciplines—for the inclusion of such fields in the Creative Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences as History, Art History, Communications Studies, Cultural Sociology, Cultural Studies and the Fine Arts in a scholarly literature dominated to date by Political Science, Policy Studies, and International Relations. [#4:]

As important, our partnership is responding to an equally urgent call to bridge the gap between “academics” and “practitioners” in the study of cultural diplomacy—albeit in an innovative way. I say innovative, because our project proposes a rethinking of the categories “academic” and “practitioner” as the field currently understands them. [BLANK]. Currently, [#1] the field sees cultural diplomacy in terms of *diplomatic* practice and so its academics are those in Political Science, International Relations and Diplomatic Studies – [#2] and its practitioners are diplomats, policy-makers and foreign ministry officials. [SLD #3] We are calling for radical expansion of the “academic” category [#1] beyond those working in disciplines traditionally engaged in cultural diplomacy research, and

[#2] of "practitioners" beyond those identified with the diplomatic field—to encompass academics and practitioners on the *cultural* side of cultural diplomacy -- that is, artists, educators, [#3] administrators, activists, entrepreneurs, institutions, NGOs, donors and others active in the cultural sphere. We're insisting on the inclusion of workers and scholars from the cultural fields, not only to bring them into conversation with one another, [SLD] but also to enable those on the *cultural* side to inform academics and practitioners on the *diplomatic*.

Our hope is that their new proximity to one another troubles discussion on at least two counts: [SLD#1] first, that it foregrounds the myth of culture's neutrality; that is, the diplomatic field's perception of culture as a benign entity through which Cultural Relations practitioners advance long term goals seemingly independent of the strategic interests of the state. [SLD#2] And second, that it makes apparent that cultural workers are always already involved in the politics of culture that underpin the building and management of global relations.

Something of a Trojan Horse, this attention to "the cultural" in diplomacy – to *cultural* relations, to *cultural* diplomacy and to the *cultural* boundedness of diplomacy itself – smuggles those of us trained as academics and practitioners in the cultural disciplines into a discussion in which we would otherwise be perceived as lacking authority by those already on the inside. Once smuggled inside, self-reflexivity challenges those of us on the cultural side to examine our taken-for-granted understandings and practices through a diplomatic lens, to recognize ourselves as political actors and as such, collaborators with academics and practitioners on the diplomatic side in the "epistemological soul searching" with which Western statist diplomacy is currently faced.

In short, we want to put the *culture* into the study and practice of cultural diplomacy.

[SLD] Today, we are speaking to the reports coming out of our three research summits on the Cultural Relations Approach to Diplomacy: Practice, Players, Policy. Together, they map a sequence of exchanges designed to bring emerging lines of inquiry forward for consideration in charting directions for further research, advocacy, and policy development.