

Alliance for Citizen Engagement

**END OF
SUMMER
CELEBRATION**

September 2021



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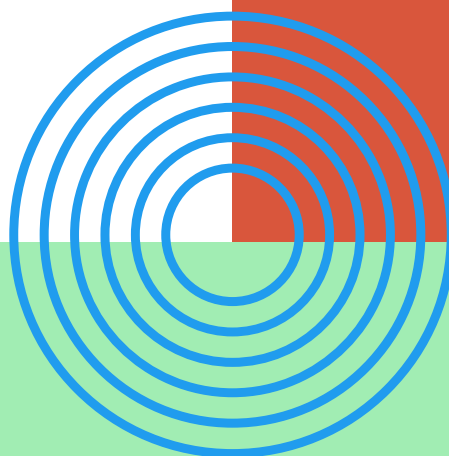


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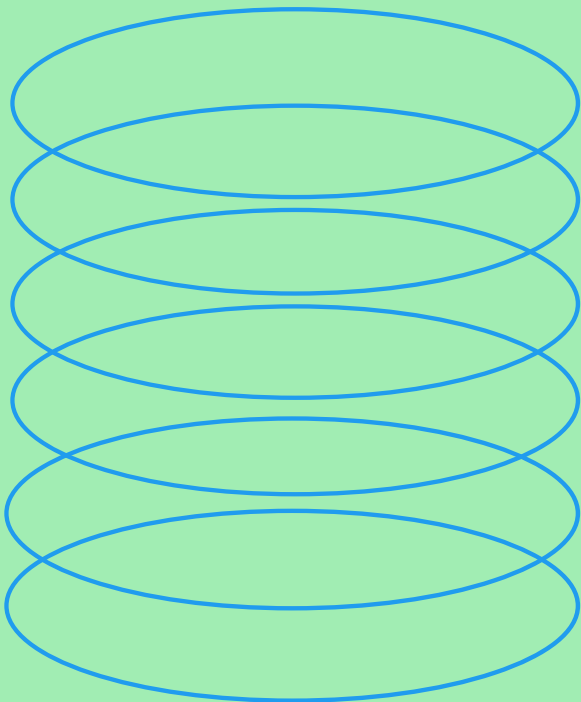
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THE STORY OF ACE

A trusted, national, nonpartisan think tank driven by the generation of policy researchers

Our vision is to combat political polarization by creating a more objective, informed, democratically-engaged generation.

ACE's founder worked as a refugee resettlement coordinator and Arabic translator in Bulgaria after graduating from Colgate University in 2019. While there, she witnessed the gap between real world immigration struggles and a U.S. debate caricatured by sound bites, partisan bickering, and misinformation. In response, she wrote several nonpartisan, introductory briefs on immigration policy to make the complicated topic accessible to young voters. Her research gained traction, and Siena moved back to the United States to pitch her idea for a trusted, national, nonpartisan think tank. The concept received funding, and Siena began building a team of young, entrepreneurial policy researchers in Boston.

The next step was to create a formal Student Fellows program, research standards, and publishing platform powered by the next generation of policy researchers. Student Fellows hone their policy research and analysis skills, learn how to look at all sides of an issue, and communicate to an audience with a diversity of political ideologies in a nonpartisan way. ACE opened applications for the first class of Student Fellows in December of 2020 and was overwhelmed by the outpouring of interest from all over the country. An exceptional group of graduate students with expertise in their research areas joined the organization to manage teams of Student Fellows. This expanded ACE's focus on immigration to nine new research areas, from foreign policy to environmental policy and criminal justice.

ACE continues to find new ways to inform young voters on policy issues. The Political Priorities Worksheet helps users identify their core political issues, and narrow their focus to actionable policies. The Dark Money exercise demonstrates how campaign finance regulations function on a local level by creating a voter's-eye view of an election campaign inundated with possibly deceptive political advertising.

SIENA FROST

Executive Director

WORK AT ACE

Siena is ACE's founder and is currently the Executive Director and Director of Policy Research. She has led the Immigration Policy team since January, 2021. Over the summer, the Immigration team focused on forced migration including US policies for refugees and asylum seekers, and this semester the team plans to focus specifically on immigration via the southern border.

BY SIENA

[EU-Turkey Migration Agreement](#)
[Intro to US Refugee Policy](#)

MORE FROM THE IMMIGRATION POLICY TEAM

[Introduction to Climate](#)
[Migration](#) by Grace Austin
[US Response to the Rohingya](#)
[Crisis](#) by Leshan Loonena

BIOGRAPHY

Siena graduated Cum Laude from Colgate University in 2019 with a BA in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and a Minor in Geography. Siena has extensive experience with quantitative and qualitative social science research, and her areas of interest include: intercultural dialogue, Muslim/Christian relations, and immigration and refugee policy. Siena has worked for the US Department of State, New Zealand's National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, and the European Commission's Social Cohesion Initiative in Brussels. She is a Fulbright Semi-Finalist, Projects for Peace Awardee, and Fellow at the Center for Freedom and Western Civilization.

Prior to founding ACE, Siena studied Arabic in Egypt and volunteered with Caritas Bulgaria's refugee integration program. Siena is an award-winning public speaker and competitive debater, and in her free time she enjoys cooking, reading historical fiction, studying Turkish, and whitewater kayaking.

SUMMER 2021

ACE's biggest class yet!

STANDOUT WORK

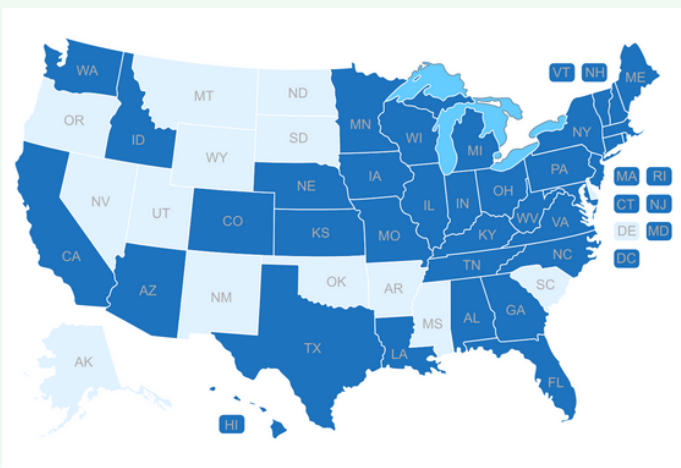
Historical Context for US Housing Policy [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), and [Part 4](#) by Sam Kleven

The Northern Triangle: [Intro](#), [Guatemala](#), [El Salvador](#), [Honduras](#) by Emmanuel Orozco Castellanos

[Introduction to Incarceration](#) by Noreen Ali

[Understanding Vaccine Passports](#) by Elizabeth Bennett

[Introduction to the World Trade Organization](#) by Caleb Bray



NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

This summer was about experimenting with new ways to engage young voters and execute on ACE's mission.

We established graphic design, video editing, teams to communicate information in new ways, and social media and public relations teams to expand ACE's audience.

ACE gave 4 Research Fellowships to support in-depth research culminating in 20-35 page reports, and 2 Local Governance Fellowships to aid student seeking to engage with their home communities.

BY THE NUMBERS

110 Student Fellow
18 Research Teams
140 research briefs

NATIONAL FOOTPRINT

Student Fellows in 37 states 85 colleges/universities, 35,000+ research reads

FRANCESCA REYNOLDS

Research Associate

WORK AT ACE

Francesca joined the ACE team in June, 2021 and led the Foreign Policy: Transatlantic team. This semester, she designed ACE's Democratic Governance team and will lead five students in writing briefs about democratic backsliding, election security, and freedom of speech. Francesca has also taken on the role of Director of Student Development, and designed a series of workshops and career readiness sessions to allow Student Fellows to learn more about potential career paths and build essential skills.

BY FRANCESCA

[The Euro and its Impact on the European Union](#)
[Intro to US-Uk Relations](#)

MORE FROM THE FOREIGN POLICY: TRANSATLANTIC TEAM

[Introduction to NATO](#) by Sara Garfield Sebert
[Failures and Successes of the United Nations](#) by Katelyn Balakir

BIOGRAPHY

[Francesca](#) graduated from University College London with a 1st honors in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Both during and after college, Francesca worked for Members of the British Parliament as a speechwriter and policy researcher, therefore much of her expertise focuses on British politics and the country's international relations. Francesca is also an international award-winning competitive debater and now coaches children from public schools in her spare time. Her areas of interest include: causes of Brexit and the demise of the EU – UK relationship, UK diplomacy and international relations, government structure, and electoral systems. Francesca now works as a Management Consultant and specialises in public services consulting.

Visit the [Foreign Policy: Transatlantic](#) or the [Democratic Governance](#) research pages to read more of Francesca's work.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

We focus not just on providing nonpartisan information to engage young voters, but also on giving student fellows the support and opportunity to become the next generation of leaders in the policy and nonprofit space.



LEADERSHIP, TEAMWORK & RESPONSIBILITY

ACE is primarily a student-led organization. From the moment students join ACE they are given individual responsibilities for their research team, from writing the newsletter to designing cover images. Students partner up to tackle challenging topics and give each other constructive feedback.

Highly motivated students rise to senior positions in the organization. They might lead their own research team of students, manage the organization's outreach efforts, manage ACE's relationships with partner universities and organizations.

This work prepares students to take on roles with significant responsibility and leadership components after they graduate out of the program.

RESEARCH, CRITICAL THINKING & COMBATting POLARIZATION

Students think through complex policy issues using evidence and logic rather than sound bites and partisan attacks. They always look at both sides of every issue and fairly represent viewpoints, even if they disagree with them.

Every Student Fellow receives individual feedback on their research and writing style from Research Associates with advanced degrees in their field of study.

In this way, ACE is combatting political polarization and building a more objective, informed, democratically-engaged generation.

ELISE SMITH

Local Government Project Fellow

WORK AT ACE

This summer, Elise was awarded the Local Governance Project Fellowship to support her work in her hometown of Wellesley, Massachusetts. Through the Local Governance Project, fellows go back to their hometowns and

1. Identify a community need using the Political Priorities Worksheet
2. Research local governance solutions to that need
3. Write a report on potential solutions to share the findings with the community.

In Wellesley, environmental policy was the clear priority for the community, so Elise dug into environmental issues in the area. She found that water pollution was leading to shortages in the community, and focused her research on ways the local government could improve monitoring of water quality and cut down on pollutants entering local water supplies.

BIOGRAPHY

Elise is currently an undergraduate at Columbia University studying American Studies and Sociology. Elise is hoping to attend law school upon completion of her undergraduate degree. She is passionate about human rights and criminal justice reform, ending mass incarceration, advocating for sexual assault survivors, and many other social justice initiatives. Elise is a member of the women's rowing team at Columbia University, as well as being a member of Columbia University Women in Law and Politics, and the Columbia Athletics Pre-Law Society. She is currently working as an intern at the Yellow Heart Committee, a non-profit organization that works to support the holistic healing of trauma survivors, specifically survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Outside of academics, she enjoys hiking, running, getting coffee with her friends, and going to the beach.

READ THE PAPER

[Read Elise's research paper](#) on the Local Governance Project in Wellesley and [other LGP research](#).

LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROJECT: WELLESLEY

Scrapbook



DO YOU WANT TO MAKE A CHANGE IN WELLESLEY?

MAKE YOUR PRIORITIES KNOWN BY FILLING OUT THIS WORKSHEET, THE RESULTS WILL BE USED FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY SOLUTIONS



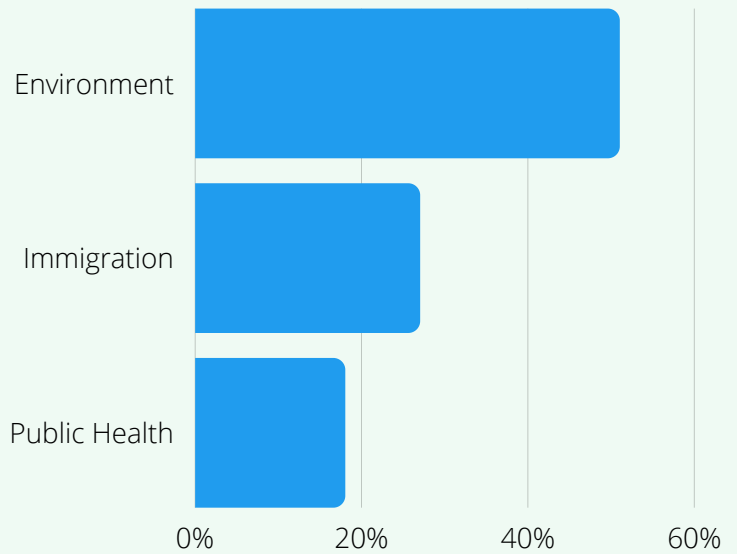
RESEARCH INITIATIVE LED BY LOCAL RESIDENT ELISE SMITH AND ACE

Use group code: WELLESLEY



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ELISE SMITH: ELISE.UTE.SMITH@GMAIL.COM OR 6178931055

Primary Issues



The Swellesley Report

More than you really want to know about Wellesley, Mass.

Researching community's political priorities

Wellesley resident Elise Smith is working with the Alliance for Citizen Engagement, a non-profit, non-partisan organization that aims to increase civic engagement through research and outreach. This summer, Elise is conducting research about the political priorities of the Wellesley community, and what local government policies could be implemented to best address those priorities. In order to do this, a critical mass of Wellesley residents need to fill out the 'Political Priorities Worksheet' that ACE has developed. Make your voice and priorities heard by filling out this worksheet. The results of this first stage will be used to inform the rest of the project, including finding solutions to the problems identified by the community and addressing the priorities of Wellesley residents. Thank you!

ANDREA BRUCE

Photojournalist

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Andrea will share her journey from photographing conflict zones in Iraq to traveling across the United States in 2016 to document political polarization and citizens' relationship with democracy. Her narrative will be visualized by her own photographs, spanning a period from 2003 to 2020.

MORE ABOUT ANDREA

[Personal Website](#)

[Documenting Democracy](#)
podcast, Overheard at
National Geographic, Nov. 3,
2020

["What Democracy Means to
Americans"](#), National
Geographic, Nov. 2, 2020

BIOGRAPHY

Andrea Bruce is an award-winning documentary photographer whose work focuses on people living in the aftermath of war and citizens' relationship with democracy. She chronicled the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2003-2010 as a staff journalist for the Washington Post. She has been working on project called *Our Democracy* for National Geographic since 2016 which looks at how the citizens of the United States view democracy and the role of government. Through this project, Andrea traveled to different communities across the country to intimately explore ideas of contemporary democracy to visually record the political climate of the US. Andrea is currently the co-owner of the NOOR photo agency.

AIDAN GNOTH

Senior Policy Advisor

WORK AT ACE

Aidan designed and built the new Political Priorities Worksheet, combining his web development experience with his passion for using technology to facilitate democratic engagement. He has served as ACE Senior Policy Advisor since summer of 2020, helped format ACE's overall research strategy and five-step research process. Aidan also sits on the Editing Board.

MORE ABOUT AIDAN

[Personal Website](#)

Read Aidan's [academic work](#)

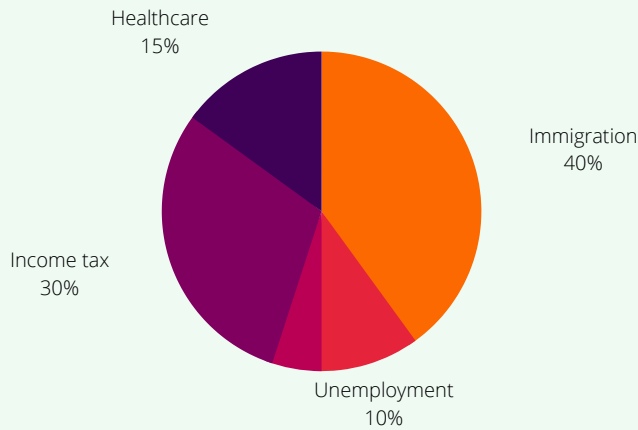
Aidan led the [Environmental Policy team](#) at ACE in Spring, 2021

BIOGRAPHY

Aidan Gnoth recently completed his PhD in Peace & Conflict Studies at the University of Otago in New Zealand. He is about to embark on a yearlong postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Tubingen in Germany. Prior to undertaking his PhD, Aidan worked as a public policy advisor for the New Zealand government. Before joining ACE he worked as a researcher, political advisor, lecturer, and disaster relief coordinator, and he is excited about bringing his wide array of skills to our team. In his free time he enjoys skiing, hiking, hang gliding, and (when it's raining) reading.

POLITICAL PRIORITIES WORKSHEET

Primary Issues



Secondary

1. Education
2. Campaign finance

Threshold

1. LGBTQ rights
2. Middle East foreign policy

ACTIVATES YOUNG VOTERS

Political engagement can seem overwhelming to young voters. There are so many issues, and each one seems complicated and hard to penetrate. We've heard from young voters that these hurdles are the main challenges to becoming politically engaged.

That's why ACE built the Political Priorities Worksheet. Users can decide how many issues they can think about at once, and if they want to stay with high level issues like criminal justice or housing, or if they want to get into the nitty-gritty with prison rehabilitation policy or zoning restrictions.

The Political Priorities Worksheet helps young voters focus in on their most important issues, and provides a roadmap of how to think about political engagement. It breaks down the barriers keep young voters from fully engaging.

The Political Priorities Worksheet helps voters break down the political landscape into a few actionable types of issues:

1. Threshold: issues where voters want their elected representatives to align with them. These issues could be values-based, rather than having a direct influence on a voter's day to day life.
2. Primary: the handful of issues where a voter wants to see immediate legislative activity. They are the issues which cause voters to protest, write letters, and closely follow policy developments.
3. Secondary: issues where a voter wants to see concrete similar to primary issues in the sense that they are things you would like to engage with and see progress, but they are not as important as the primary issues. Many voters have a series of policy changes they would like to see, but they are not the main issues which drive them to the poles.

GUIDES ACE'S RESEARCH

ACE aggregates the results of the Political Priorities Worksheet to understand which issues are important to our readers. You can see the live-updating results on the [America's Political Priorities page](#).

This big picture data guides ACE's research strategy and helps us decide which issues require attention. Housing policy appeared as a major topic in the Spring of 2021, so ACE launched the first Housing Policy team in the summer. This semester we are supporting 2 Housing Policy teams, 1 focusing on affordable housing and 1 looking into land development/environmental implications.

By following the interests of our audience, ACE ensures research is relevant to the issues young voters care about.

SUPPORT ACE'S WORK

ACE is a 501(C)(3) organization and all donations are tax deductible. 100% of your generous contributions go to helping our students provide factual, nonpartisan policy information and engaging young voters.



Consider Becoming a Sustainable Giver Today!

Sustainable Givers subscribe to a monthly donation

- \$25 - comes with an ACE hat
- \$50 - hat+coffee and discussion with a team of student researchers
- \$100 - hat+coffee+invitation to ACE's annual Vision Conference



Learn more about one-time and sustainable giving.



THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THIS EVENT.

Thanks to all of our
speakers for
generously giving
their time, and to
Sarah Geary for
planning this event.

