



In May 2018, the Harriman Institute held a Carnegie Corporation–sponsored workshop bringing together scholars, journalists, and human rights activists to discuss how authoritarian governments in Eurasia and beyond have monitored, threatened, kidnapped, and assassinated political exiles abroad. A U.S. Helsinki Commission staffer was in attendance, and I later learned that the commission planned to propose the Transnational Repression Accountability and Prevention Act. On September 12, 2019, along with workshop participant and Harriman alumnus Nate Schenckan (MARS-REERS, 2011) of Freedom House, I was invited to testify before Congress about the tools of international repression. The bill was proposed the next day.

This is not the first time a Harriman Institute workshop has contributed to conversations in the policy making community, and I continue to be amazed, not only by the Institute’s convening power, but also by the incredible success of our alumni. Nate is a great example of someone who has used his Harriman analytical training in his advocacy work. The September Helsinki hearing marked his fourth congressional testimony about international human rights abuses, and I am delighted to include a profile of him in this issue of *Harriman Magazine*.

Every year, the Harriman Institute hosts the convention for the Association for the Study of Nationalities, which will celebrate its 25th anniversary in May. I am excited to share with you an essay by Ukrainian journalist, public intellectual, and former visiting professor in Ukrainian studies at the Harriman, Mykola Riabchuk, which grew out of a paper he presented at ASN. Mykola discusses the Ukrainian government’s blacklist and how it is different from censorship in countries like Russia and Saudi Arabia.

As our cover story, we have a beautiful photo essay by the photographer Hope Wurmfeld, whose exhibit depicting her 1964 road trip around the Eastern Bloc with her husband was mounted at the Harriman Institute this winter. This is a thick issue with a lot of exciting content—an essay by our postdoctoral fellow Daria Ezerova on the reasons behind Russia’s cultural nostalgia for the ’90s; an article by our student Daniel Petrick on the erosion of Islamic tradition during Kurban Bajram in Prizren, Kosovo; an excerpt from a novel by Ukrainian writer Oksana Lutsyshyna; and an interview with two Ukrainian LGBTQ activists on Russian anti-LGBTQ propaganda.

In January we celebrated the life and career of our dear friend and colleague Mark von Hagen. Mark was a bright spirit who made an invaluable contribution to regional studies and the development of the Institute. You will find an appreciation of Mark’s life and career in the in memoriam section.

As always, we love to hear your feedback and ideas for future stories.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Cooley', written in a cursive style.

Alexander Cooley  
Director, Harriman Institute