

ISH-DC Tribute Dinner Honoring the Global Leadership Award Recipients, Hosted by Ambassador Wittig and Mrs. von Voss-Wittig of Germany

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Dorothee Stieber, I study Political Communication and International Affairs at the George Washington University and I am also a Fulbright Scholar.

Today, I am speaking on behalf of thousands of young people who have shared life at the International Student House here in D.C.

Coming for studies and internships, flying in from Germany, or India- we all find a home at ISH.

Walk into our dining room on the first day and you find 90 strangers sharing a meal.

A couple of days later, *that room is filled with friends.*

Now, this does not happen by accident.

Years of tradition and support have created ISH to attract young people who- however different- are united by one pursuit: to *understand the world* and to help *shape it for the better.*

We need places like ISH to bring us together.

I arrived in Washington a passionate European, and a curious German, with a bit of knowledge of America and so much less about Indonesia or Pakistan, let alone South Sudan!

By now, my good friend *Atem* has given Juba a kind heart and a friendly face for me. Thank you, Atem!

At ISH *relationships grow.*

Because together we stumble to breakfast in the morning. Because we share the good days and the bad.

We meet late at night, fumbling through those essays on international law or world hunger. And we wonder: *How on earth will that get done by daylight?* Together, we'll find a way.

After many shared nights and days with *truly amazing people*, I can say: **We are family.**

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We are also a *think tank on our world.*

Because we recognize: **The future is on all of us.**

So, together we explore the very real challenges of our time:

At ISH we discuss: *What makes a good democracy? What makes a good policy maker?*

How do we ensure all people get a fair share in the wealth that is our world?

With the diversity of *this* house, there is an abundance of insights to draw from.

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Imagine my deep breath when, I, a passionate supporter of the EU and also supporting Chancellor Merkel's policy, met young Hungarian Patrick, a strong supporter of Victor Orbán.

Intrigued by one another's positions, we spent countless dinners and coffees debating migration and stability, the importance of the nation and the pressures of diversity. Quite interesting conversations also for our fellow residents.

And how valuable our conversations were.

They brought about – if not agreement- a deep friendship, for which I am so grateful.

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As for America, I see it at its best here at ISH: an inspiring place, *a convener*.

And on days when a German and an Indian girl fail to see the beauty of the super-bowl or share curiosity over America's presidential campaign,

our American residents gracefully see us through; explaining the struggles of a nation, and conveying the *beauty and fascination* that is also America.

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Ladies and gentlemen, we all know:

Dialogue can be so hard.
Foreignness can be so loud.

The solution to both is not learned from books.

It takes the **community** of many shared meals, the **empathy** of many shared pieces of music, the **trust** in sharing a home.

And then we get to true care, to understanding.

We may struggle with differences, misunderstandings- but **because we share a home, we learn that "we are one" is not just an idea. It's a reality.**

So, while voices get louder that ask: *why care about the rest of the world?*

Each ISH resident becomes a peacemaker, a bridgebuilder.

Together we share the struggle of today's national and global challenges.
Together, we encourage each other and we *rejoice* in crafting tomorrow's solutions.
In this community, we have no doubt that these solutions are attainable.

My fellow residents, *if I may ask you to stand-*

These are just a few of the great people I get to share a home with. And I am sure that each of them will be a leader in whatever they pursue.

So, on behalf of all ISH residents, I thank each of you -- *our corporate sponsors, Board members, and friends here tonight.*

Your support is what makes true understanding possible and a compassionate global community a reality. I would like to especially thank our many corporate and individual sponsors.

As a Fulbright Scholar, I am deeply grateful and thank the German and the American governments for enabling my studies here.

Mr. Ambassador and Mrs. von-Voss Wittig,

I am especially grateful that you have welcomed us into your home tonight and supported our House as the diplomatic chair for this past year's Leadership Awards.

I was thrilled to have the opportunity to be here with you, and I am honored to present you with this small token of our gratitude.