



## The I-House D.C. Forum – Activity Report

### Inauguration

The I-House D.C. Forum, or alternatively Alpheus Waldo Stevenson Forum, named after the founder of the I-House movement, was born out of the fundamental insight that the I-House hosts many bright individuals with ideas, opinions, and insights. The Forum intends to channel these ideas into a semi-structured discussion, to actively foster dialogue and exchange of ideas. This format is closely modeled after existing debating clubs, such as the Oxford Union, with one key difference: the topics are not dictated, but chosen by the participants. Whatever comes to mind, no topic is off limits. Of course, there needed to be rules. The first is personal respect. The I-House Forum seeks to enshrine the value of separating thought from person in the participants, and any ad hominem will be met with exclusion. Furthermore, the Forum operates under the Chatham House rule, which means that the idea may be shared, but not whom the idea originated with. The organizers of the Forum strive to assemble at least one event each month.

### First Event–The Free Speech Reckoning

Staying true to its word, the first event of the I-House D.C. Forum sought to tackle the question of the limits of free speech. Participants investigated whether there ought to be limits on what can be said, and whether there can be a compromise between freedom of speech, and freedom from harm—however this harm may look like. The international resident body discussed diverse perspectives on free speech: how Americans view free speech, why Germans place greater restrictions on what can be said, and how Moroccans feel about speech directed at their Monarchy. The event concluded with a brief summary and participants were asked whether their perspectives had changed. Several participants did say that they were introduced to new ideas.



*Picture 1: The inauguration of the I-House D.C. Forum with the first discussion.*

### Second Event–Sustainability And Individual Responsibility

In the second iteration of the Forum, based on participant input, sustainability and individual responsibility were discussed. Can each person be held responsible for their actions, which have little to no impact in the grand scheme of things? Participants cordially exchanged controversial views, for example on divergent responsibilities between developing nations and the industrialized ‘Global North.’ Participants also critically examined the role of individual consumption, primarily of meat. Is it justifiable to consume carbon-intensive animal products at a time of intensifying global warming? Once more, different cultural and religious perspectives enriched the discussion and led to an open, frank, and constructive exchange of ideas. The discussion was followed by a workshop intended to develop concrete proposals on how to make the I-House more sustainable. Participants wrote and submitted a letter to the house, presenting tangible solutions.



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Picture 2: Participants developing proposals during the Sustainability Workshop.

### Third Event–Female Leadership in Indigenous Filmmaking

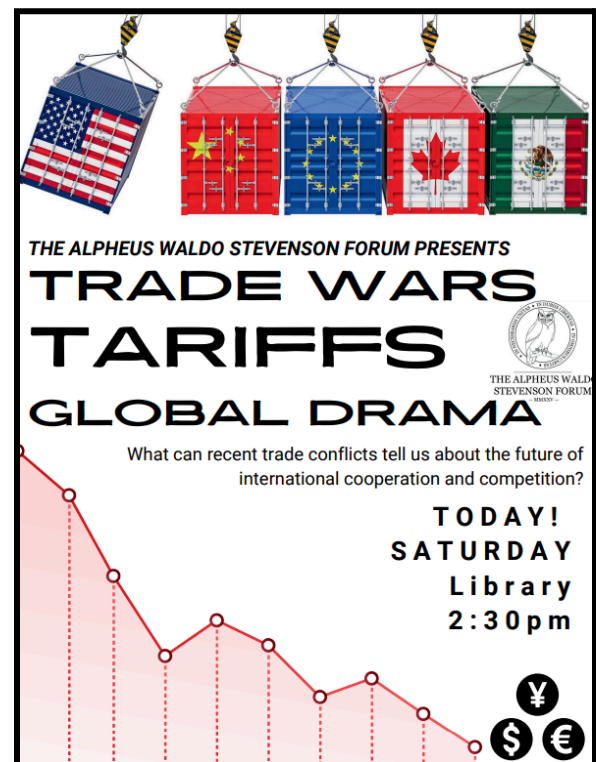
The third event held under the I-House D.C. Forum umbrella reflects the diversity of event types the Forum supports. A resident undertaking her PhD in Anthropology and Film Studies presented her research and led a discussion on an intersectional perspective on filmmaking, focusing on the role of indigenous women in the practice. As this topic is generally not widely known or researched, participants were able to gather a lot of new knowledge. The resident then presented a movie she selected and provided context, further enriching the discussion. This event reflects the dedication of the I-House D.C. to uplift diverse voices and expose participants to truly novel fields of inquiry.



Picture 3: Flyer for the third event.

### Fourth Event–Discussion on Tariffs

Given recent developments, participants decided to attempt to contextualize the Trump Administration's trade policy and its impact on the global economy. Here again, the internationality of the resident community provided a unique opportunity to draw on country-specific knowledge and discuss impacts on Vietnam, Ukraine, India, countries in Europe, and many more. The discussion was partially guided by residents with expert knowledge in international trade and economics. Leveraging both the substantive and geographic knowledge allowed the discussion to flourish and provide a much more detailed picture than individual media reports could. Once more, several participants commented that they had been exposed to new ideas and were able to understand economic developments better.



Picture 3: The promotional material for the third I-House D.C. Forum event. Each event is prepared and advertised.



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### Fifth Event—Careers and Activism

The fifth event under the I-House D.C. Forum saw the first guest speaker. A resident proposed and organized this event, as the speaker is their mentor. The guest speaker was Bennett Freeman, long-time civil rights activist, human rights activist, and corporate sustainability consultant. The guest speaker shared insights about his career, his activism, and how to combine impact with financial safety, family planning, and career advancement. Participants were able to ask questions and share their experiences, given the current upheavals.



*Picture 4: Participants of the fifth Forum event with the guest speaker Bennett Freeman*

### Sixth Event—American-Czech Poetry Reading at I-House DC

On a gentle Sunday afternoon, the garden at the International Student House of Washington, DC bloomed with poetry and conversation. As part of the **Waldo Stevenson Forum**, residents and guests gathered for a special American-Czech Poetry Reading featuring acclaimed Czech poet **Petr Hruška** and American poet and translator **Joshua Weiner**.

The event was proposed by **Nancy**, a former resident who lived at I-House from 2005 to 2007—and met her future husband here over breakfast. Returning for the event, she recited lines from Hruška's work, adding a personal and touching layer to the afternoon.

Hruška's readings in Czech were beautifully complemented by Weiner's English translations, creating a moving exchange of languages and cultures.

Following the reading, guests enjoyed wine, lively conversation, and the chance to take home signed copies of Hruška's poetry. The afternoon was a celebration not just of literature, but of memory, connection, and the enduring spirit of I-House.







THE ALPHEUS WALDO  
STEVENSON FORUM  
— 1885 —



INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENT HOUSE  
*washington, d.c.*

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### Vision for the Future

The organizers of the I-House D.C. Forum aim to hold at least one major flagship event this year, for example a roundtable discussion with external experts. In addition, they aim to include more research presentations, where residents who, for example, work on their PhDs can present initial findings and guide discussions on diverse topics. These intentions buttress a desire to institutionalize the forum, similar to the Ambassador Fellows Program.