

Vaclav Havel Library Foundation Fellowship for Human Rights Announcement

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation announces The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation Fellowship for Human Rights, a summer fellowship in Prague for undergraduate students studying in the United States. Founded as part of Havel@80, the annual fellowship program will offer students a two week, fully-funded opportunity to learn from and engage with organizations in the Czech Republic working to carry forward Havel's legacy in the field of human rights.

Vaclav Havel (1936-2011) was a playwright, essayist, political dissident, and the former president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. He became well-known as a dramatist in the 1960s when his plays *The Garden Party* and *The Memorandum* were seen on world theatre stages. In the 1970s, he was one of the authors of Charter 77 - a manifesto calling for the Czechoslovak government to adhere to the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Agreement. Around this time, Havel released *The Power of the Powerless*, a powerful political essay that dissects the nature of totalitarian rule and the resistance that emerges within it. In 1989, he became the leader of the two-month long Velvet Revolution, which culminated in his ascension to the Presidency of the re-established democratic Czechoslovakia. Only a few months earlier, he had been released after being held by the communist regime for his activities in defense of human rights.

Fellowship Details

Following his Presidency, Havel emerged as a champion of human rights and freedom around the world, leaving a legacy that continues to inspire individuals in the fight for justice and democracy. In its first year, the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation Fellowship for Human Rights will be awarded to an undergraduate student who embodies the qualities associated with Havel: leadership, creative dissent, and a commitment to the global advancement of human rights. The recipient will have the opportunity to spend two weeks in Prague, where she or he will work with Czech organizations engaged in pressing human rights issues both domestically and worldwide, including the developing Syrian refugee crisis. Over the course of the two weeks, the fellowship recipient will also collaborate with local nonprofits to create a project that she or he will introduce to her/his home university in conjunction with the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation.

The main partner in Prague is the Vaclav Havel Library that collects, researches, disseminates, promotes and advocates the spiritual, literary, and political legacy of Vaclav Havel through archival work, historical research, publications, and public events. One of its main aims is to educate about and present to the public the historical significance of the fight for human rights and freedoms in the totalitarian period and the formation of civil society during the establishment of democracy. Participating organizations include People in Need, organizers of the One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, a Czech nonprofit, non-governmental organization that implements humanitarian relief and long term projects and educational and human rights programs all over the world.

A round trip air ticket to Prague, accommodation, and a stipend will be provided. The fellow will be hosted between June 1 and June 15. The itinerary in Prague will be prepared individually according to the fellow's interests.

Application Criteria

Applicants to the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation Fellowship for Human Rights must be currently enrolled undergraduate students (first-years, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) at accredited undergraduate colleges or universities in the United States. Applicants of minority and underrepresented backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.

Successful candidates will be those who demonstrate a passion for and active engagement with human rights, justice, and democracy. In addition, they will possess the characteristics of leadership, intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, and creative drive. Applicants will be reviewed by a jury on the basis on their resume, transcript, a brief cover letter, a letter of reference, and an essay of no more than 1,500 words on the topic specified below. The deadline to apply is March 15, 2016 at 11:59 P.M. EST. The recipient will be notified in mid-April.

Essay Topic: Resistance

Perhaps the most famous essay written by Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* became an essential work of dissident literature in the Cold War. As it passed by hand through the dissident movements of Communist-bloc countries in Eastern Europe, the essay—through its narrative style—would inspire hope and solidarity among those resisting the totalitarian regime. While the circumstances have changed, Havel's impactful essay continues to inspire those fighting fear and oppression around

the world. Resistance, both in aim and in subject, lie at the heart of this essay. In 1,500 words or less, address the relationship between resistance and modern day crises of human rights. Essays may be, but need not be, academic in style and form. Creativity is encouraged.

Applications will be judged by a jury named by the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation. The jury will evaluate the essays on their quality, including the demonstrated understanding of resistance as it appears in Havel's essay and the original way in which they apply it to modern issues. Additionally, other common criteria such as clarity of structure and the effect on the reader will be applied.

Further Instructions

In the cover letter, please be sure to include the following information: name, class year, university, and major, as well as your email address, phone number, and mailing address. In addition, please specify who will be submitting the letter of reference on your behalf.

Applications, including cover letter, transcript, resume, and essay, should be sent in pdf format to info@vhlf.org. The subject line should be "Fellowship Application - Last Name, First Name." Letters of reference can be submitted directly to info@vhlf.org with the subject line "Fellowship Letter of Reference – Last Name of Applicant, First Name". **The deadline to submit completed applications is March 15, 2016 at 11:59 P.M. EST.**