



## 2020 Gershowitz Conference

### Theme

Pandemic of Disinformation: Messengers, Media, and Miasma of Public Health

### Date

November 11-12, 2020

### Overview

Accurate information saves lives. In times of crises, news media, data journalism, fact checkers, and investigative reporting shed light, whereas disinformation spreads darkness, fear, and a chain of bad decisions. While seeking to counter the spread of misinformation in what has been defined as the first 'disinfodemic,' journalists, policy makers, and the general public must devise measures to adapt or die in a fragmented media ecosystem. The conference explores different concepts, countries, and collaboration to navigate the storm in an otherwise disinformation age. The conference will also explore some of the larger issues outside the media sphere relevant to the unique time period in which we live.

## Schedule and Presentations

### Day 1

10:00-10:20

Opening Statements:

Dr. Robert Shick, Affiliated Faculty at SPAA – Conference Co-Chair.

Dr. Uchenna Ekwo, President, CMPI – Conference Co-Chair

Gabriel Gershowitz, Attorney, DLA Piper LLP, NY

10:20 – 10:45

Keynote Speech:

The Honorable Herbert Klein

Former United States Congressman

Member, Rutgers University President's Council

Moderator:

Edmund Janniger – Vice President, Center for Media and Peace Initiatives

10:45-11.45

**Panel I: Media/ Disinformation**

Panel of discussants explore the fight against disinformation and why trust matters. Are digital technology and social platforms conduits of the information disorder? What is the implication of fighting back against disinformation and misinformation through media and information literacy? What's the difference between disinformation (information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country) and misinformation (information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm).

1. Vinod Sekhar, Publisher, *The Vibes*, Malaysia
2. Shahira Amin, CNN Contributor & former Deputy Head of Nile TV, Cairo.
3. Austin Mackell, CEO, Write-In-Stone, A Media Transparency NGO
4. Fathia Eldakhkhny, Columnist, Almasry Alyoum Newspaper – Egypt's first independent newspaper.

11:45 – 12.30

Q & A

12.40 – 1:40

**Panel II  
Coronavirus and Drivers of Misinformation**

Moderator: Dr. Robert Shick

Cornell University researchers analyzing 38 million articles about the pandemic in English-language media around the world found that political leaders including President Trump are the largest drivers of falsehoods involving the Coronavirus pandemic. The study is the first comprehensive examination of coronavirus misinformation in traditional and online media. Panel explores the potential costs of misinformation and how it could be deadly and sow confusion about life-saving personal and policy choices.

1. The Hon. Richard S. Gordon, JD Founder/President, Gordon Strategic Advisor
2. The Most Reverend Manuel A. Cruz, D.D. Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Newark
3. Justin Buffer, Educational Director, Cambridge Learning Center, NJ
4. Olga Zbarskaya, Ph.D., MA, MSW, ACSW, - President, *OZCREDO Institute of Creative Thinking. "Infusing Creative Thinking into recharging personal emotions in crisis and strategies for filtering information."*

1:40 – 2:40

Q&A

2.40 – 3:00

**Special Address**

**Disinformation and the Political Process:**

Hon. Richard S. Gordon, Esq.  
President, Gordon Law Firm and Gordon Strategic Advisors

3:00 – 3:20

**Special Address**

**Cross-Cultural Dialogue and International Religious Freedom**

Most Rev. Manuel A. Cruz, D.D.  
Auxiliary Bishop of Newark and Vicar for the Hispanic Apostolate

3:20

**Overview and Closing Remarks**

Dr. Charles E. Menifield  
Dean, School of Public Affairs and Administration. Rutgers University - Newark

## Day 2

11.00 am - 1.00 pm

### **Panel I**

#### **Geopolitical Realities After Covid-19 -- With A Special Emphasis on Small States**

Moderator: Joseph Hammond, Vice Chairman of CMPI

The story of Covid-19 storm is still unfolding. Both advanced economies and emerging economies are still counting the cost of the impact of the pandemic. The full economic, cyclical and structural effects are not quite visible yet, but, in any case, they will be gigantic. For example, the World Bank says Africa requires about 1.2 trillion dollars to recover from the impact of Covid-19. While any prediction may be difficult, this panel will explore the possible impacts the virus will have on international politics. If anything, the pandemic acts as a revelation of the characteristics of our new world: the weakness of global governance - in the area of health in this case - on the one hand; and a shift in the center of gravity of the global balance of power especially the role of the United States whose trajectory may be profoundly altered by the ordeal currently facing many other countries.

*Note:* In the midst of the global struggle to contain the pandemic, the plight of Small States and Self-governing Territories around the world are not reflected in global policy agenda. Panelists discuss the challenges and opportunities of Small States who have equal voting rights within the United Nations General Assembly but receive unequal treatment in global policy formulation especially at this moment of reckoning for equity and fairness.

#### Speakers:

1. Dr. Yetunde Odugbesan-Omede -Visiting Professor of Global Affairs and Politics, Farmingdale State College, SUNY
2. Muhammad Magassy, Member of Parliament of Gambia (recorded)
3. Iswandy Ahmad, Member of Brunei Legislative Council
4. Tembeik Julius Chine of Director Social Integration and Welfare - African Caribbean Pacific Diaspora Youth Support Services (ACP DYSS)
5. Lord Fusitu'a, is a Tongan politician and noble of the Realm
6. Mathew Yngson, CEO of ASEAN-Caribbean Council

3:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Q & A

Closing Remarks

#### **Event Partners:**

Commonwealth Africa Initiative, London  
Institute of Global Affairs