

Committee on Human Rights

Committee

Martin Chalfie

Chair

Martin Chalfie is University Professor and former chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at Columbia University. In 2008 he shared the Nobel Prize in Chemistry with Osamu Shimomura and Roger Y. Tsien for his introduction of Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP) as a biological marker. Dr. Chalfie was born in Chicago, Illinois. He obtained both his A.B. and Ph.D. from Harvard University and then did postdoctoral research with Sydney Brenner at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, England. He has taught at Columbia University since 1982, when he joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor. In addition to his membership in the NAS and NAM, Dr. Chalfie is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Royal Society of Chemistry (Hon.). He shared the 2006 Lewis S. Rosenstiel Award for Distinguished Work in Basic Medical Science from Brandeis University and the 2008 E. B. Wilson Medal from the American Society for Cell Biology with Roger Tsien.

Andrea J. Liu

Vice Chair

Andrea Liu is a theoretical soft condensed matter physicist. She is best known for developing the field of jamming, which provides a unifying conceptual framework for understanding commonalities in systems ranging from atomic and molecular glasses, to colloidal glasses and granular matter. She received her AB degree in physics at the University of California, Berkeley, and her PhD in the area of critical phenomena from Cornell University in 1989. After switching to complex fluids during her postdoc at Exxon Research and Engineering Co., she worked on polymer theory as a postdoc in the Chemical Engineering, Materials Science and Physics departments at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She then joined the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she was a member of the physical chemistry faculty for ten years before moving to the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Pennsylvania in 2004, where she is now the Hepburn Professor of Physics. Dr. Liu's research combines theory and computation to study soft and living matter. In living matter, her research focuses on the role of mechanics in biology, with the aim of understanding how new and general collective phenomena, often beyond those typically observed in inanimate soft matter, can emerge at the subcellular, cellular and tissue levels. In soft matter, she and her collaborators have shown that jamming produces solids at an opposite pole from perfect crystals, providing a new way of thinking about the nature of rigidity in disordered solids.

Georges C. Benjamin

Member

Georges C. Benjamin has been executive director of the American Public Health Association (APHA) since 2002, where he is leading the Association's push to make America the healthiest nation. He came to APHA from his position as secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Benjamin became secretary of health in Maryland in April 1999, following four years as its deputy secretary for public health services. A graduate of the Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois College of Medicine. He is board-certified in internal medicine and a master of the American College of Physicians, a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, a fellow emeritus of the American College of Emergency Physicians, an honorary fellow of the Faculty of Public Health, and an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Public Health. He is the author of more than 200 scientific articles and book chapters. Benjamin is an active member of the National Academy of Public Administration and the National Academy of Medicine. He serves on the boards of many nonprofit organizations including Research! America, the Truth Initiative, the Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA, the Environmental Defense Fund, and Ceres. In 2008, 2014, and 2016, he was named one of the top 25 minority executives in health care by Modern Healthcare Magazine, in addition to being voted among the 100 most influential people in health care from 2007-2018 and in 2021-2024. In 2023 - 2025, Washingtonian Magazine voted Benjamin one of the 500 most influential people shaping policy.

Pamela J. Bjorkman

Member

Pamela Bjorkman is the David Baltimore Professor of Biology and Biological Engineering and a Merkin Institute Professor at Caltech. She received a BA in Chemistry from the University of Oregon and a PhD in Biochemistry from Harvard University. As a graduate student and postdoctoral fellow with Don Wiley, she solved the first 3-D structure of a major histocompatibility complex molecule. Bjorkman is a member of the US National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and an elected Fellow of AAAS. She received the William B. Coley Award for Distinguished Research in Immunology, the James R. Klinenberg Science Award, the Gairdner Foundation International Award, the Paul Ehrlich and Ludwig Darmstaedter Award, the Max Planck Research Award, the Rose Payne Distinguished Scientist Award, an NIH Director's Pioneer Award, the Ceppellini Award from European Federation for Immunogenetics, was a L'OREAL-UNESCO Women in Science Laureate, and received the Pearl Meister Greengard prize. Bjorkman's lab studies the structural basis of the host immune response to HIV-1, SARS-CoV-2, and other viruses.

Wesley L. Harris

Member

Wesley L. Harris is Charles Stark Draper Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he was previously associate provost (2008–2013) and head of the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics (2003–2008). Dr. Harris is former Head of Aero Astro, became the very first Director of MIT's Office of Minority Education, and most recently served as the Associate Provost for Faculty Equity. In addition to numerous teaching and administrative duties since, he has been a champion of diversity efforts at the Institute. His contributions include creating methods for measuring and improving student achievement and initiating programs that meet the needs of black students. Before coming to MIT he was a NASA associate administrator(1993–1995); vice president and chief administrative officer of the University of Tennessee Space Institute (1990–1993); and dean of the School of Engineering and professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Connecticut, Storrs (1985–1990). Dr. Harris has done academic research associated with unsteady aerodynamics, aeroacoustics, rarefied gas dynamics, sustainment of capital assets, and chaos in sickle cell disease, and made seminal contributions in each field. He earned a bachelor of science degree (with honors) in aerospace engineering from the University of Virginia in 1964, and master's and PhD degrees in aerospace and mechanical sciences from Princeton University in 1966 and 1968 respectively.

Michele Heisler

Member

Michele Heisler, MD, MPA is Kutsche Research Memorial professor of internal medicine and of public health at the University of Michigan where she co-directs the NIDDK P30-funded Michigan Center for Diabetes Translational Research (MCDTR). She also serves as medical director for Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), the Nobel Peace Prize-awarded health and human rights nongovernmental organization. Dr. Heisler's research focuses on the design, evaluation, and scaling up of programs that improve health by promoting respect for human rights and mobilizing peer, family, and community support to address social and behavioral determinants of health. Her pragmatic clinical trials and implementation studies demonstrated the effectiveness of diverse peer support models--training and leveraging support from fellow patients, community members, family--to achieve sustained improvements in health and social wellbeing. She is working with health systems and plans in the US and overseas to implement these models. She has also applied rigorous research methods to investigate health consequences of human rights violations, attacks on healthcare and health workers, development of medical-legal partnerships to document, prosecute, and prevent torture, violence, and discrimination against marginalized groups. Findings have informed legislation, reparations for individual victims and communities, United Nations (UN) protocols, resolutions, commissions of inquiry, and successful prosecutions of perpetrators. An expert in the Istanbul Protocol (IP), she has conducted hundreds of IP-based medico-legal evaluations of survivors of torture and trainings for clinicians. She has authored >300 peer-reviewed studies (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=Michele+Heisler>). Dr. Heisler received her MD degree from Harvard University and MPA degree from Princeton University. She completed residency in internal medicine and health services research training as a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar at the University of Michigan.

Brigid L. Hogan

Member

Brigid Hogan is a cell and developmental biologist who received her BA and PhD from the University of Cambridge, UK and postdoctoral training at MIT. Her early career focused on the morphogenesis of the mammalian embryo, and the differentiation of embryonic stem cells. Her lab also identified progenitor and stem cells in the mouse and human lung and their role in normal development and repair after injury to the adult organ. She enjoys teaching and mentoring and co-organized the first course on the Molecular Embryology of the Mouse at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. She is currently Professor in the Department of Cell Biology, Duke University Medical School. From 2002 - 2018 she was George Barth Geller Professor and Chair of the Department. She was President of the Society for Development Biology and the American Society for Cell Biology. She is a member of the National Academy of Sciences (2005) and National Academy of Medicine (1996), a member of EMBO (1985) and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2001) and the Royal Society of London (2001).

Douglas S. Massey

Member

Douglas S. Massey is Henry G. Bryant Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, with a joint appointment in The Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. Dr. Massey's research focuses on international migration, race and housing, discrimination, education, urban poverty, stratification, and Latin America, especially Mexico. He is the author, most recently, of *Young, Gifted, and Diverse: Origins of the New Black Elite*. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, Psychology, and Spanish, from Western Washington University in 1974, and in 1977 he received a Master of Arts in Sociology from Princeton University. Massey continued at Princeton University and received his PhD in 1978. He was a Guggenheim fellow in 1990-1991. He served as the 92nd president of the American Sociological Association, 2000-2001 and from 2006 to 2015, he was the president of the American Academy of Political and Social Science.

Jonathan D. Moreno

Member

Jonathan D. Moreno is the David and Lyn Silfen University Professor at the University of Pennsylvania where he is a Penn Integrates Knowledge (PIK) professor. At Penn he is also Professor of Medical Ethics and Health Policy, of History and Sociology of Science, and of Philosophy. Moreno is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine and a member of the National Academies Committee on Human Rights. Moreno has served as a staff member or adviser to many governmental and non-governmental organizations, including three U.S. presidential commissions, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee. Moreno is currently a member of the Bayer Bioethics Council.

Moreno received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Washington University in St. Louis, was an Andrew W. Mellon post-doctoral fellow, holds an honorary doctorate from Hofstra University, and is a recipient of the College of William and Mary Law School Benjamin Rush Medal, the Dr. Jean Mayer Award for Global Citizenship from Tufts University, and the Penn Alumni Faculty Award of Merit. He has held the honorary Visiting Professorship in History at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England. In 2018 the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities presented him with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

Deb A. Niemeier

Member

At the University of Maryland, Deb Niemeier's research targets aspects of the built environment that give rise to structural inequality, particularly within the context of climate change. She is the Clark Distinguished Professor and is a member of the Dept. of Civil and Environmental Engineering. She currently serves as Director of the Maryland Center for Disaster and Resilience, a center aimed at improving understanding of resilience in the built environment. Her research examines the effects of climate change in disasters, particularly fire prone areas. She is interested in understanding how the formal and informal governance processes in urban planning shape community resilience in the face of disasters. She has also worked in the areas of transit, housing and air quality. Her work in air quality has shaped state and federal policy. In 2014, she was named a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) for "distinguished contributions to energy and environmental science study and policy development." In 2015, she was named a Guggenheim Fellow for foundational work on pro bono service in engineering. In 2017, she was elected to the National Academy of Engineering. In 2019, she was elected to the American Philosophical Society.

Ellen Ochoa

Member

Ellen Ochoa (NAE) is a retired director of NASA Johnson Space Center and a former NASA astronaut, having served on the crews of four space shuttle missions. Ochoa has expertise in aerospace operations and optical information processing and a special interest in encouraging diversity in STEM fields, especially women and underrepresented minorities. Ochoa is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Optica (formerly the Optical Society of America) and the National Academy of Inventors. She currently serves on several boards, including the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and SRI International, and previously chaired the National Science Board and the Nomination Evaluation Committee for the National Medal of Technology and Innovation. She was also previously on the Federal Bank of Dallas Board, a trustee of Stanford University and vice chair of the Manned Space Flight Education Foundation. Ochoa received a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from Stanford University.

Carlos del Rio

Ex Officio Member

Carlos del Rio, M.D., is Distinguished Professor of Medicine at Emory University School of Medicine, and he currently serves as International Secretary for the National Academy of Medicine. He is also a professor of global health and epidemiology at the Rollins School of Emory University, Executive Associate Dean of Emory University School of Medicine at Grady Health System, and co-director of the Emory Center for AIDS Research. His research interests include the early diagnosis of HIV, linkage to and retention in HIV care, and prevention of HIV infection. He has long worked in hospitals and clinics with hard-to-reach populations including substance abuse users to improve outcomes of those infected with HIV and to prevent infection among those at risk. In addition, Dr. del Rio's interests include the optimization of HIV management in resource-constrained countries and the translation of research findings into practice and policy. Dr. del Rio is a native of Mexico, where he attended medical school at Universidad La Salle, graduating in 1983.

John G. Hildebrand

Ex Officio Member

John G. Hildebrand is Regents Professor Emeritus of Neuroscience at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts, he earned his B.A. (biology, 1964) at Harvard University and Ph.D. (biochemistry, 1969) at Rockefeller University. After faculty service at Harvard (1970-1980) and Columbia (1980-1985) Universities, he joined the University of Arizona as founding head of the Division of Neurobiology (1985-2009) and later the Department of Neuroscience (2009-2013) after the Division became a Department in the College of Science. His research fields are insect neurobiology and neuroethology, chemical ecology, and vector biology. A past president of the Association for Chemoreception Sciences, International Society of Chemical Ecology, and International Society for Neuroethology, he currently is International Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences (2014-2026). He is a member or fellow of the African Academy of Sciences, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Philosophical Society, Brazilian Academy of Sciences, German National Academy of Sciences 'Leopoldina', National Academy of Sciences, Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters, and The World Academy of Sciences; Honorary Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society (UK); and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Entomological Society of America, the International Society for Neuroethology, and the International Science Council.

Rebecca Everly

Staff Officer

Rebecca Everly is the Director of the Committee on Human Rights. Dr. Everly received her PhD from the Cambridge University Centre of International Studies, and holds a JD and LLM from Duke University. Prior to joining the CHR, Dr. Everly worked with International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, where she coordinated a five-country study on the strategic use of human rights institutions to promote the rights of women and girls. Her prior experience includes positions in the International Development Law Organization, the Centre for Promotion of Human Rights Teaching and Research at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the State Department.