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Newsroom: NYT's Kristof To Address RWU On Refugees 04-04-2017

Roger Williams University School of Law

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April 4, 2017

Newsroom

NYT's Kristof to Address RWU on Refugees

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof to visit RWU, urging listeners to remember when fear drove Americans to revile newcomers and reject those seeking refuge.



April 4, 2017: As the nation grapples with proposed travel bans and refugee restrictions, [New York Times](#) columnist [Nicholas Kristof](#) will visit Roger Williams University, urging us to remember the times when fear drove Americans to revile newcomers and reject those seeking refuge.

It's easy to forget, he says, that the United States once interned Japanese-Americans, turned away Anne Frank's family and subjected Irish Catholics to brutal mistreatment. At the same time, we should keep in mind how much the nation has been strengthened by those who sought refuge here, he says. He recalls the time, in 1952, when an American church welcomed a young man who'd been raised in what is now Ukraine and jailed by the Gestapo. That man was Kristof's father.

"As the son of a refugee, I think we have a moral obligation to try to help at the margins," Kristof says.

"And I also think, ultimately, immigration strengthens us as a country. There are challenges, and there can be disruptions. But I think we should be a little less vilifying and a little more welcoming."

On Thursday, April 20, you are invited to spend an evening with Kristof — a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner — as part of the Roger Williams University [President's Distinguished Speakers Series](#) at RWU, which is exploring the global refugee crisis in a year-long series titled, "[The Quest for Refuge](#)."

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"Moral Obligations and National Interest:
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Refugees in the 21st Century
A presentation by Nicholas Kristof
Thursday, April 20, 2017
7:00 pm
Book signing to follow
Campus Recreation Center Gymnasium
”
Bristol Campus

In his multimedia presentation, "Moral Obligations and National Interest: Refugees in the 21st Century," Kristof will offer a historical context for the current refugee and immigration controversies, discuss [his father's refugee experience](#) and urge a deeper understanding of all people to reduce the stereotyping of "others."

"When we are fearful, we do things we regret," Kristof says. "There have been real terror attacks, so I understand why people are nervous. But we should think before we take actions that result in people being sent back to countries where they may be at risk of murder and rape."

A New York Times columnist since 2001, Kristof won Pulitzer Prizes for his coverage of [Tiananmen Square](#) and the [genocide in Darfur](#). He grew up on a farm in Oregon, graduated from Harvard and studied law at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. He was a longtime foreign correspondent for The New York Times and speaks Chinese, Japanese and other languages. With his wife, Sheryl WuDunn, he has written several books, including [A Path Appears](#) about how to make a difference.

Kristof says that in addition to pushing to shape U.S. policy, individual Americans can make a difference in their hometowns, in their own lives. "Whether or not the government policy is right, as individuals we can sponsor refugees or support local refugees or simply engage to try to reduce the 'other-izing' of groups," he says. "That may mean reaching out and learning about a different group, or an interfaith dialogue to reduce this human tendency to stereotype other groups."

RWU President Donald J. Farish says he hopes Kristof's message about leading a meaningful life resonates with students.

"Nick Kristof takes on issues of social justice here in America and around the world," Farish says. "He tells it as he sees it and has developed a huge and loyal family of regular readers of his column in The New

York Times. We are very pleased to be able to bring him to Rhode Island to speak to our students and our friends in the broader community."