



# The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships For New Americans

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## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

**Paul and Daisy Soros**, Hungarian immigrants and American philanthropists, established their fellowship program for New Americans in December 1997 with a charitable trust of fifty million dollars. Their reasons for doing so were several. They wished to "give back" to the country that had afforded them and their children such great opportunities and felt a fellowship program was an appropriate vehicle. They also felt that assisting young New Americans at a critical point in their education was an unmet need. Finally, they wished to signal to all Americans that the contributions of New Americans to the quality of life in this country have been manifold.

Since the founding of The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans, there have been eleven rounds of competition. Almost 10,000 individuals have applied in those rounds. The eleventh round was completed in February 2008 when the trustees announced the Class of 2008. Each class has thirty Fellows. In the past eleven competitions, 323 Fellowships have been given; there are now 60 Fellows at 23 universities undertaking graduate study in 25 different fields. There are also 263 alumni.

Central to an understanding of the entire Program is an understanding of the donors, Paul and Daisy Soros. Assisting young New Americans in pursuing their life chances in this country is an autobiography of their lives - where friends, family and associates helped them as they built a life in this new land.



Born in Hungary in 1926, **Paul Soros** studied mechanical engineering in Budapest. When a Communist government came to power, he began looking for a chance to escape. In 1948, as a member of the Hungarian ski team at the Olympic games in Switzerland, he defected. Having made his way to the United States, he took a master's degree in engineering from Polytechnic University in Brooklyn. In 1956, he founded Soros Associates, an

international engineering firm that eventually had port development, offshore terminal, and bulk handling projects in 90 countries. Mr. Soros holds several patents in material handling and offshore technology and is the author of more than a hundred technical articles. He served on the Review Panel of the President's Office of Science and Technology and received the Gantt Medal of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the Outstanding Engineering Achievement Award of the National Society of Professional Engineers. He is now active in Paul Soros Investments, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and is a board member of several corporations and nonprofit organizations.



**Daisy Margaret Soros** grew up in Hungary and graduated from Ecole Hotelier in Lausanne, Switzerland. She came to the United States on a student visa, enrolling at Columbia University. She later attended New York School of Interior Design, studied at New York University School of Social Work, and worked extensively as a counselor to terminally ill patients and their families.

Mrs. Soros is chairman of The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans. She is a Member of the Board of Lincoln Center, a Member of the Board & Executive Committee of the New York Philharmonic, Honorary Trustee of International House; Member of the Board of Overseers of Weill Cornell Medical College, Society of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, Venetian Heritage Inc., and the Mayors Fund to Advance New York City; and Executive Committee Member of the Rockefeller University Council. She and her husband underwrite The Midsummer Night Swing Program of Lincoln Center.

Mrs. Soros was the recipient of the Metro International Fulbright Award, Lincoln Center Laureate Award, Ellis Island Medal of Honor, International House Harry Edmonds Award, the Casita Maria Gold Medal of Honor, The National Immigration Forum's "Keepers of the American Dream Award," was honored by the Henry Street Settlement and received an honorary Doctor of Laws at Bates College in Maine.

Daisy and her husband, Paul, have two sons, Peter and Jeffrey. Peter is involved in finance and lives in England with his wife, Flora Fraser, the renowned writer, and their two sons. Jeffrey, a screenwriter and philanthropist involved in contemporary art, resides in California with his wife and two children

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## THE SELECTION PROCESS

For the 2008 round, there were about 700 applications from 257 undergraduate and 123 graduate institutions. Candidates applied from the whole spectrum of graduate fields -- professional and

academic, from creative writing and voice to medicine and neuroscience. They represented 136 different national origins, an astonishing number when it is realized that there are only 190 countries in the United Nations! Not only did they hail from 136 different national origins, but many represented oppressed minorities -- Hmong, Mien, Chaldeans, Jews, Armenians, Overseas Chinese, Overseas Indians, Parsees, Copts, Baha'is, Ismalis, Melkite Christians, etc., etc.

On this website under "Current Fellows," the 323 individuals who received the Fellowship are briefly profiled. It may be helpful, however, to look at profiles below of five Fellows so that potential applicants can see the range of backgrounds and career trajectories successful Fellows have.



Pakou Hang, born in 1976, is a doctoral student in political science at University of Minnesota at Twin Cities. She completed her BA in political science at Yale University in 1999. Between her graduation from Yale and her beginning the doctoral program, Pakou spent two years in Boston as a research analyst with KLD Research and Analytics, a firm advising socially responsible investments. Born in the Ban Vinai Refugee Camp in Thailand but now naturalized as an American citizen, Pakou is a member of the Hmong community and came to the US with her family, first settling in Providence, Rhode Island, and later, in St. Paul, Minnesota, where they still live. Active in politics, Pakou served as a deputy political director to Senator Paul Wellstone and campaign manager in the election of Mee Moua to the Minnesota legislature. She has also been active in the nonprofit civic organization Progressive Minnesota and in the University-based Jane Addams School for Democracy and its efforts to engage immigrants in local and state issues important to them. In 2003, she received the Hubert H. Humphrey Public Leadership Award from the University of Minnesota. At Minnesota and afterwards, she plans to move between formal study of political strategy and the active engagement of the immigrant population.



Babacar Cisse is a third year student in the MD/PhD program at the College of Physicians & Surgeons, Columbia University. He received his BA in chemistry from Bard College, where he won an National Institute of Health Undergraduate Scholarship, a Howard Hughes Undergraduate Research Fellowship, and the Reamer Kline Award, given to Bard undergraduates who contribute significantly to the vitality of the college. As a physician, he wants to help those in his immediate surroundings in America; as a research scientist; he hopes his future work will have penetrating effects both here in the US and abroad. Babacar has also been a big brother for orphans from the Hudson region. He immigrated to New York with the dream of attaining a higher education and won the green-card lottery. He was born in 1974 and lives in New York City, while his wife and family remain in Dakar, Senegal.



Monica Santana Rosen is a first-generation Dominican American and was born in 1976. She is a graduate of Harvard Business School. After graduating from Wesleyan University in 1997, Monica joined the Tiger Foundation, assisting nonprofits working to break the cycle of poverty in New York City. She later served as executive director for Management Leadership for Tomorrow, working to increase minority leadership across sectors. Monica is presently on the board of The Woodhull Institute for Ethical Leadership, which offers educational retreats for women. Monica's parents both emigrated from the Dominican Republic. The youngest of four children, Monica was born and raised in New York City. Adhering to her parents' belief in a solid education, Monica's long-term aspiration is to develop a program offering academic enrichment and financial literacy to young children and their parents.



Van Tran, a summa cum laude graduate of Hunter College of the City University of New York where he majored in sociology, is in his fourth year of the PhD program in Social Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He was born in 1979 in Ho Chi Minh City and came to the United States as a refugee in 1998. His family settled in the Bronx, where they still live. Van is a naturalized citizen. After immigrating, he worked at Wankel's, a 109-year-old hardware store in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where he was responsible for hiring and training, and advanced to the position of vice president. His academic interests include international migration, racial and ethnic studies, urban communities and social stratification. He has studied the Tibetan refugee community in New York City as well as shifts in American immigration policy from 1924 to 1965. His current research focuses on how the end of bilingual education in Massachusetts in 2002 is impacting working-class immigrant children and their families.



Nneoma Nwogu holds a JD from the University of Michigan Law School. She also completed a Development Studies degree at St Antony's College, Oxford where she earned a distinction in her MPhil thesis on Justice, Sectarian Politics, and the (Re)making of Memory. Nneoma graduated cum laude in 2002 with a BA in philosophy and Africana studies from Wellesley College. While there, she successfully completed a thesis in both of her majors and received dual honors. As the president of Students for Development in Oxford University, she organized an England-wide conference on post-conflict development. As an undergraduate, she served as a court advocate for victims of domestic violence in the Worcester District Court and co-founded a summer leadership program for Nigerian students. Nneoma has been honored for her academic papers at Wellesley and Oxford with the Ella Smith Prize and the St Antony's

Callaway Prize, respectively. A creative writer, she has published two of her poems in Wellesley's Open World and she received the Agnes Perkins Prize for Creative Writing. She co-founded Slice () Mango, a literary collective of writers working in non-canonical literary traditions at the University of Oxford. Nneoma is a naturalized US citizen and plans a career in International Law. She is an associate at Hogan & Hartson in Washington, DC.

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## A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF SOROS FELLOWS 1998-2008

### Total Number of Applications

1998	627	6.37%
1999	1214	12.33%
2000	740	7.52%
2001	933	9.48%
2002	1004	10.20%
2003	1071	10.88%
2004	971	9.86%
2005	1035	10.52%
2006	771	7.83%
2007	809	8.22%
2008	668	6.79%
Total	9843	100.00%

### Gender

Female	151	46.75%
Male	172	53.25%
Total	323	100.00%

### Age

14-19	1	0.31%
20-22	66	20.43%
23-25	169	52.32%

26-28	73	22.60%
29-30	14	4.33%
Total	323	100.00%

**Immigration Status**

Child Nat Parents	163	50.46%
Green Card Holder	57	17.65%
Naturalized Citizen	103	31.89%
Total	323	100.00%

**Level at Time of Application**

Graduate Students	213	65.94%
Not Enrolled	44	13.62%
Trans. Non US Program	20	6.19%
Undergraduates	46	14.24%
Total	323	100.00%

**National Heritage \***

Africa	19	4.74%
Commonwealth	4	1.00%
East Asia	87	21.70%
Eastern Europe	40	9.98%
Latin America / Carribean	60	14.96%
Middle East	58	14.46%
South Asia	75	18.70%
Southeast Asia	27	6.73%
Western Europe	31	7.73%
Total	401	100.00%

**Education Cluster \*\***

Arts	26	7.90%
Business	25	7.60%

Humanities	5	1.52%
Law	85	25.84%
Medicine	115	34.95%
Science / Engineering	24	7.29%
Social Sciences	49	14.89%
Total	329	100.00%

National Heritage \* - Several Candidates have multiple heritage.

Education Cluster \*\* - Several Candidates are studying joint degree programs.

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## THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Deadlines for applications are November 1st of the given year; we encourage candidates to submit and get their collateral material to us before that date. Life being as it is in universities, however, there is a crush of material to us. Letters of recommendation are often late, making a full consideration more difficult. Once the application and other materials are in hand, teams of at least three readers consider the candidacy and determine who will be invited for interviews. Like every strong fellowship program, the Soros Fellowships have many more able people applying than can ever be invited for interviews. Painful though the decision process is, 84 are eventually invited. The interviews are held in January in New York and Los Angeles, with a February announcement.

What generalizations can be made on the basis of 9843 applications, 857 interviews, and 323 appointed Fellows?

- **Fields that seem especially to predominate in results (e.g., law and medicine) are those fields that have the largest number of applications.**
- **Relative to their numbers of applications, many other fields have greater success rates.**
- **Private institutions generally do a better job in informing candidates about the Soros opportunity and seem to take greater care in presenting their candidates.**
- **Two good essays and letters of recommendation can offset a poor interview.**
- **Candidates who only demonstrate excellence in their academic field, without evidence of other creative and sustained activity, do less well.**
- **Padded resumes are easily detected by readers and**

**selection panelists.**

- **Candidates in master's programs are less likely to apply. (56% Doctoral and 44% master's)**
- **No geographical area of immigration origin does disproportionately well. Talent is well distributed around the world. Differences in numbers reflect difference in numbers of applicants, which in turn reflects differences in recent immigration rates.**

[top](#)**THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

The selection panels for New American Fellowships consist entirely of successful New Americans and Soros Fellowship alumni. Twelve people are interviewed each day, preceded by a dinner the previous night. The purpose of the dinner is for candidates to meet staff and some panelists, to learn more about the interview process, and to meet each other. It has been the experience of past dinners that candidates get to know and appreciate each other, but they also are grateful to discuss their New American experience with others.

With two teams of panelists, each candidate has two thirty minute interviews. The objective of the interviews is to allow the candidates to tell their story as they wish to tell it and then elaborate on items they included in their two essays. It cannot be emphasized too greatly how important these essays are to having a good interview. Candidates are interviewed either in the morning or afternoon and are then free to return to their home or institution. The Soros program pays for transportation and accommodations. Increasingly, the selection panels include Soros alumnae/i.

- **Dress professionally, but comfortably. A suit and tie are appropriate attire for men, and a suit, dress, or skirt (or slacks) and blouse for women.**
- **Body language is an essential part of making a good impression. Sit up straight, maintain good eye contact, and try to engage the entire panel, not just the person who asked the question.**
- **Be aware of your particular nervous habits, and avoid them. Try to convert your nervous energy into enthusiasm. Clapping your hands in your lap can help control stress-induced fidgeting. Try to relax and enjoy the atmosphere of the interview.**
- **Be sure to re-read your application before the interview. Anything you have written therein may come up in the questions, and it is embarrassing to forget what you wrote.**
- **Don't be surprised at unexpected questions.**



**Prepare to think quickly. One of the most effective methods of practicing is to stage mock interviews with friends or colleagues. Often they will ask harder questions than any panelist might.**

- **Don't take too long on any one question. You want the panelists to ask you as many questions as possible, so that you have lots of chances to shine!**
- **Don't fake an answer you aren't sure of: just say that you don't know.**
- **Be yourself.**

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## EXPECTATIONS OF FELLOWS

If someone is successful in receiving the Soros Fellowship, what is expected? In addition to the frequent e-mail and correspondence so that the Program can get maintenance checks to the Fellows and half-tuition to the university, the obligations are four-fold. First, the Program Director will expect at least once in the Fellowship period to visit the Fellow's institution to see how things are going, meet with the dean, financial aid officer, and major professor. Whenever the Director visits a campus, a dinner is usually held for all the Fellows in the area (i.e., Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington) and it is hoped all Fellows can manage to attend. Second, each year the Fellow is expected to forward to the New York office a copy of the transcript. Third, twice in the Fellowship, the Fellow is expected to attend a Fall Conference in New York City, where all the Fellows have a chance to meet each other and the Soroses and members of our National Advisory Council, share views on such common concerns as immigration and human rights, and visit key cultural places in the City (usually the Metropolitan Opera, the Metropolitan Museum, and a Broadway show). The Program pays for transportation and accommodations. Finally, at the end of Fellowship, each Fellow is asked to write an "end-of-Fellowship" report. While not "required," it is hoped that all Fellows will keep in touch with the Program office and each other through the newsletter and the website chatroom.

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## GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans is governed by a **Board of Trustees**. Its nine members were chosen to provide an understanding of higher education, selection processes, and the operation of a charitable trust. Its members are:

George Bugliarello  
*Chancellor*  
Polytechnic University

Peter A. Georgescu  
*Chairman Emeritus*  
Young & Rubicam Inc.

J. Michael Graglia  
*Consultant*  
Boston Consulting Group

David E. McKinney  
*Executive Secretary*  
Thomas J. Watson Foundation

Lawrence C. McQuade  
*President*  
River Capital Management

N.J. Nicholas Jr.  
*Investor and volunteer*

Daisy M. Soros  
*Philanthropist and volunteer*

Jeffrey P. Soros  
*Writer*

Catharine R. Stimpson  
*Graduate Dean of Arts & Sciences*  
New York University

Its **Senior Advisors** are:

Paul Soros  
*President*  
Paul Soros Investments

In addition, the Soros Fellowships have a **National Advisory Council**, distinguished New Americans who take a personal interest in the assistance of the next generation of New Americans. They are:

Hanna Holborn Gray  
*President Emeritus*  
The University of Chicago

Vartan Gregorian  
*President*  
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Rajat Kumar Gupta  
*Senior Partner Worldwide, McKinsey & Company, Inc.*

Hon. Henry A. Kissinger  
*Statesman*  
Nobel Laureate

Bette Bao Lord  
*Author*  
Chair, Freedom House

Peter Martins  
*Ballet Master-in-Chief*  
The New York City Ballet

Philippe de Montebello  
*Director*  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Rafael Viñoly  
*Architect*

Torsten N. Wiesel  
*President Emeritus*  
The Rockefeller University  
Nobel Laureate

Fareed Zakaria  
*Editor*  
Newsweek International

Administering the program are two members of the staff: Dr. Warren Ilchman, Program Director, a former professor, college president and foundation executive and Ms. Carmel Geraghty, Program Officer, an art historian, formerly with the National Museum of Ireland and the Frick Collection, and a recent citizen of the US.

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The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans

## The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans Program Requirements

**The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans provide opportunities for continuing generations of able and accomplished New Americans to achieve leadership in their chosen fields. The Program is established in recognition of the contributions New Americans have made to American life and in gratitude for the opportunities the United States has afforded the donors and their family.**

### **What is the Program and how many Fellowships for New Americans are offered?**

The Fellowships are grants for up to two years of graduate study in the United States. The recipients are chosen on a nationally competitive basis. Thirty Fellowships will be awarded each year.

### **Who is eligible to become a Fellow?**

A *New American* is an individual who (1) is a resident alien, i.e., holds a Green Card; or (2) has been naturalized as a US citizen; or (3) is the child of two parents who are both naturalized citizens.

The Program is open to individuals who retain loyalty and a sense of commitment to their country of origin as well as to the United States, but it is intended to support individuals who will continue to regard the United States as their *principal* residence and focus of national identity.

The applicant must either have a bachelor's degree or be in her/his final year of undergraduate study. Those who have a bachelor's degree may already be pursuing graduate study and may receive Fellowship support to continue that study. Individuals who are in the third, or subsequent, year of study in the same graduate program are not, however, eligible for this competition. Students who have received a master's degree in a program and are continuing for a doctoral degree in the same program are considered to have been in the same program from the time they began their work on their master's degree.

To be eligible you must not be older than thirty years of age as of **NOVEMBER 1, 2008**.

### **What are the criteria for selection?**

Candidates must demonstrate the relevance of graduate education to their long-term career goals and potential in enhancing their contributions to society. Fellowships are not solely awarded on the basis of academic record. The academic record is relevant as evidence of the candidate's ability to complete successfully a graduate degree program and it strengthens the demonstration of achieving the Program's specific criteria for selection.

A successful candidate will give evidence of at least two of the following three attributes or criteria for selection: (1) creativity, originality, and initiative, demonstrated in any area of her/his life; (2) a capacity for accomplishment, demonstrated through activity that has required drive and sustained effort; and (3) a commitment to the values expressed in the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The third

criterion includes activity in support of human rights and the rule of law, in opposition to unwarranted encroachment on personal liberty, and in advancing the responsibilities of citizenship in a free society.

### **What does a Fellow receive?**

Each year the Fellow receives a maintenance grant of \$20,000 (paid in two installments) and a tuition grant of one-half the tuition cost of the US graduate program attended by the Fellow (up to a maximum of \$16,000 per academic year). The Fellowship Program pays the tuition grant directly to the institution. The size of the tuition grant depends on the cost of tuition at the institution the Fellow attends. Fees are not included in calculating tuition. If the program pursued is less than two years or the remainder of the Fellow's degree residence is less than two years, the Fellow receives the amount to cover the period required for the degree. Joint degree programs will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. It is expected that the Fellow will complete the cost of tuition from such other sources as summer employment, public and private grant and loan programs for advanced education, or matching funds from the graduate institution the Fellow attends. The Fellow will be asked to inform the Program of other awards that she/he has been offered and may be asked to accept a total combined award package that does not exceed full tuition and required fees, plus \$30,000 for maintenance. A Fellow may not work during the period of the Fellowship without the permission of the Director.

### **What may a Fellow study?**

A Fellow may pursue a graduate degree in any professional field (e.g., engineering, medicine, law, social work, etc.) or scholarly discipline in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. The Fine and Performing Arts are included. The Trustees strongly encourage applications from candidates who have not yet begun their graduate studies, but full consideration will be given to candidates in the first or second years of graduate studies in their current program.

### **Are there any limitations to where a Fellow may study?**

A Fellow may study at any accredited graduate program in the United States. It is the responsibility of the Fellow to secure admission.

### **When does the Fellowship Program begin?**

The application and selection process will take place in the late fall and winter, and Fellows will be expected to begin their graduate study no later than the following September. Successful Fellows already undertaking graduate work may be supported during the semester they are selected.

### **May a Fellowship be deferred?**

No.

### **What does applying entail?**

Applicants are required: 1) to complete an online application form; 2) to submit two essays on specified topics; 3) to submit a 1-2 page resume; 4) to assure the submission of three recommendation letters, of which one is from a faculty member familiar with the applicant's current or most recent academic work and one is from someone who is familiar with her/his performance in a work-setting, whether paid or volunteer; 5) to submit an institutional status form from the institution attended indicating when and whether the present degree program will be completed (this may be completed by a registrar, a dean or director of the program, or other authority); candidates who have a bachelor's degree and have not yet enrolled in a graduate program need not provide this form; 6) to assure the submission of a transcript from the applicant's undergraduate institution, and if her/his graduate training is already in progress, from the graduate institution as well; candidates may submit a photocopy of the transcript; 7) to submit documentary evidence that the applicant meets, as of **NOVEMBER 1, 2008**, the definition of *New American* as detailed in the second page; and 8) to have taken and submitted to the Fellowship Program, by the second week of **December 2008**, scores from any graduate aptitude test (e.g., GMAT, MCAT, GRE, LSAT) required by programs to which the applicant has applied; candidates may submit a photocopy of the score report; this requirement does not pertain to students in programs where portfolios or auditions determine admissions.

### **Where may an application be obtained?**

- Applications are available on our website ([www.pdsoros.org](http://www.pdsoros.org)) and should be submitted via the *Online Application System* (preferred method).
- Applications can also be downloaded from our website and submitted by mail.

### **What is the selection process?**

After screening, 84 candidates will be selected for interviews. The interviewers will be distinguished New Americans. The Program will provide funding for travel and accommodations. After its recommendations have been reviewed and approved by the Program's Board of Trustees, the class of Fellows will be announced in February. Unsuccessful applicants may reapply if they continue to meet the program requirements.

### **What are the responsibilities of a Fellow?**

A Fellow must obtain admission into a graduate academic program. Upon admission and matriculation, a Fellow must show continued progress towards the degree (i.e., a transcript must be submitted after each academic year of the Fellowship) and provide a final report to the Program Director. The Fellowship Program staff may require other evidence of progress.

A member of the Program staff will visit each Fellow at her/his campus.

A Fellow's attendance at graduate school must be continuous and at the same institution; any modification requires approval of the Program Director.

In addition, a Fellow is required to attend a Fellows' Conference Program of two days in New York City twice during the tenure of the award. The Program pays for all costs associated with the Fellows' Conference Program. Fellows will be given ample advance notice of the dates and locations of the Conference programs.

### **When is the deadline for application?**

The completed application must be submitted via the online applications system or postmarked by

**NOVEMBER 1, 2008.**

### **How may I be in touch with the Soros Program?**

You may do so by writing:

Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans  
400 West 59<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10019

or by Telephone (212-547-6926)

or by Email ([pdsoros\\_fellows@sorosny.org](mailto:pdsoros_fellows@sorosny.org)).