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RSF [announced](#) recently that Josephine S. Faass joined the Foundation as Executive Director in April. *The Georgist News* asked Josie for some background information, and we're pleased to share it here.



Josie Faass

I grew up on a boat in the Florida Keys with my mother, an artist, and my father, a fisherman. I spent my free time exploring the coastlines and shallow waters, and reading about space, and dinosaurs, and almost anything else to do with science. I knew that I wanted to dedicate my life and career to caring for the natural world, and went on to study biology with the notion that I would pursue a career in environmental protection. It wasn't until I was hired as a Petroleum Cleanup Site Manager by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, however, that I realized how significantly all aspects of our lived experience – from environmental quality, to taxation, to the nature and quality of urban landscapes – are shaped and produced by the public policies governing their protection, management, and use. With this in mind, and much to the chagrin of my academic advisor, I sought to pivot from the transparent and defensible scientific rigor of the lab, to the messy and unpredictable world of the social sciences, and pursued a Master's Degree, and ultimately a Ph.D. at Rutgers' Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.

The Bloustein School is where I first encountered Henry George's ideas, juxtaposed against those of Smith, Tiebout, and the other great economic thinkers. The inherent logic of what George advocated resonated strongly with me. How can we subscribe to a system that allows us to carve up the world's natural resources – for which none of us can take credit and on which we all

depend – amongst ourselves for personal gain? Why would we embrace a system of taxation that disincentivizes hard work and trade, while rewarding the maintenance of land with high productive capacity in a state of disuse? Why would we esteem the very small handful of individuals who manage to amass immense wealth for themselves while multitudes go without the most basic necessities? In reading George's works I came to understand that these aspects of modern life were not the inevitable products of some natural order, but the outcomes of policies conceived in accordance with a particular ethos – an ethos with which I found myself in profound disagreement. Like many reading this, this realization felt like a call to action, but it was one I would not immediately heed.

After graduate school, I pursued a career in academic research and administration. At the National Center for Neighborhood and Brownfields Redevelopment, the Engineering Cities Initiative, and other research centers, my roles included advising regulatory agencies on coastal habitat preservation and transportation safety and security, leading a program focused on green engineering, working with blighted communities to combat rampant rates of childhood asthma, helping to secure funding for an agricultural extension in Greece, and a variety of other endeavors. Most recently I held the position of Director of Academic Affairs at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. Once the home of Einstein, the Institute put me in contact with the world's leading physicists and mathematicians, and afforded me the opportunity to work directly with a wealthy and influential Board of Trustees. It was rewarding in many ways, but I felt as if something was missing. I wasn't protecting the environment or serving those most in need. I wasn't throwing my efforts behind stemming the inequities that grow ever more apparent in our society. I wasn't standing for any great or bold idea that had the power to reverse the "inevitable" realities of modern life.

As I join RSF as Executive Director I do so with the fervent wish to continue the important work of this organization. I will strive, together with the Directors, Staff, and extant community of Georgists and Georgist organizations, to realize the next chapter in the history of this esteemed movement. This next chapter will be one in which we maintain a solid focus on research and publishing, while working to make the ideas of Henry George as much a part of our societal ethos as the Invisible Hand or voting with your feet.

In this moment in history, I believe we are all called to action. I am grateful for the opportunity to answer this call as the new Executive Director of Robert Schalkenbach Foundation and am excited for all the good work to come.

And it turns out that Josie's mother-in-law took courses at HGS in

