

Interview with Larry Harris

Political Science Student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014 Rangel Scholar, Former State Department Intern, Aspiring United States Foreign Service Officer

Interview conducted by Albert Gianatan

- You're really into government, studying political science and interning at the U.S. Department of State. What first sparked your interest in public policy?

Hmm. My interest in public policy originated during my freshman year of high school. This was during the exciting 2008 presidential election in the United States. I became almost obsessed with it. I began reading numerous academic articles on the various policies the candidates were speaking about, both domestic and international. Soon, my regular television programming was replaced with news broadcasts. At some point during this time I realized that these are policies that will affect myself, friends, families, and people across the globe. I longed to be informed and a part of this process somehow. The thought occurred to me that I *can* be, and I was determined to do so.

- In terms of government, you seem to focus heavily on international issues. Why international and not domestic? What about global issues fascinates you and drives you to take action?

I believe what fascinates me the most about international relations is the shared commonality of humanity with every person in each country. We live in an age of globalization where we are all "connected" in some fashion, but we are also searching for ways to retain the uniqueness of our nations. This often leads to the illusion of great differences and ultimately misunderstanding, the bedrock of conflict.

There are also monumental issues that require the cooperation of all nations in order for us to tackle them. Things such as climate change, the global financial crisis, humanitarian crises and shared security concerns dominate our world. Through international relations I am able to engage in a global context and help improve life not only for my country, but also for the world.

- So you have been named a Rangel Scholar, a prestigious honor indeed. How has this program changed you or inspired you to think differently?

Being a Rangel Scholar has challenged me to critically consider many of the problems we face and create unconventional solutions to solve them. However, the greatest part about joining this program is realizing the amount of support available to those that want to pursue a career in international relations. From current and retired foreign service officers to Ambassadors, elected officials and my fellow Rangel Scholars, the support is overwhelming!

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- Clearly, you're into the idea of using government to promote positive change. Why do you believe that so many Americans seem to be so apathetic about their government?

I suspect many Americans are apathetic about, or have little faith in, government because of its performance over the past years. Bipartisanship has become taboo among elected representatives and Congress seems content with doing absolutely nothing. The recent government shutdown in October 2013 for a little over two weeks possibly cemented American's belief that their government isn't working for their interest.

- Having accomplished so much at this age, what do you see yourself doing after college? Ten, twenty years down the road?

After college, I plan on joining the United States Department of State and working as a Foreign Service Officer (FSO). For how long? I do not know at the moment! I may love it so much that I decide to remain in the foreign service for the rest of my career, or I might come back to the US after some years in the foreign service to become a domestic public servant. Either way, I plan to dedicate my life to the service of others in some capacity.