

(As Prepared)

Remarks

J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board Member

Shelby Lewis, Ph.D.

Fulbright Enrichment Seminar

Atlanta, Georgia

Seminar Welcome

Thursday, January 31, 2013

Thank you, Carolina [*Cah-roh-LEEN-uh*], and good evening to our keynote speaker and honored guests and to all assembled.

I want to extend my gratitude to colleagues at the Institute of International Education — Bassim Abbassi, Brian Diffley, Nina Hasenstein [*HOSS-in-steen*], and Danielle Ravich — as well as John Orak at AMIDEAST—for organizing this Seminar. As always, they did a wonderful job of making it interesting and relevant to the diversity of the 60 countries that you represent.

Now, on behalf of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, I am pleased to welcome you to Atlanta, Georgia, and to extend warm congratulations to the 2012 Fulbrighters in this room. You join a global community of leaders — more than 310,000 alumni from over 155 countries — with a shared commitment to learning, mutual understanding and peace.

As a fellow Fulbrighter, I have a great deal of respect for the challenges and joys you are undertaking this year, and for your courage to take the journey.

However, I believe that the best of your Fulbright journey is yet to

come, beginning with this Enrichment Seminar. This opportunity enables you to move beyond the classroom and learn more about America, its history and its people. It also facilitates the sharing of ideas and experiences with other Fulbrighters, and getting to know them better.

I believe that Atlanta is the best vantage point for exploring the United States and learning about the Civil Rights Movement because it is one of the cities that allows you to view this country through the blood - sweat- and tear-stained lens of the Civil Rights Movement. The Martin Luther King Center, which you will visit while you are here, is a monument to the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s. At the Center, you will have the opportunity to hear and read powerful words of famous and not-so-famous citizens that reflect the complexities of American history, American society, and American thought.

You might not know that Atlanta is also the city, and Atlanta University is the site, where W.E.B. Du Bois, the grandfather of the Civil Rights Movement and perhaps the major figure in the Pan African Movement undertook his ground breaking studies, including *The Philadelphia Negro*, *The Souls of Black Folks*, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* and others, and he co-founded the National Association

for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Throughout his 93 years on the planet, he was dedicated to exposing and opposing violations of human rights and civil rights around the globe. As a Public Intellectual without peer, his speeches, critiques, scholarly studies, novels, poems and articles, especially those in *Crisis*, the Journal of the NAACP which he made the strongest voice for change in the country, Du Bois provided historical, sociological, economic, psychological and political analysis of the color line, which he called the major problem of the 20th century.

Reconsidering The Souls of Black Folks was a major 2003 publication commemorating the centennial anniversary of the publication of Du Bois' best known work. Many biographies, books and essays have been written about Du Bois and a number of conferences have been held to discuss his thoughts and contributions to human and civil rights. A major DuBois Conference will be held at Clark Atlanta University on February 20-23, 2013 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of his death. I am re-reading some of his major scholarly works, reading his novels for the first time and writing a paper for the conference. I encourage you to Google Du Bois and read some of what he wrote between 1886-1963: scholarly books, articles, novels, poems, letters, speeches, manifestos to

the League of Nations and the UN, etc. I think that you will find that his words are as relevant today as they were in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Now, back to Fulbright. Most of you know that Fulbright is the leading educational exchange program of the U.S. Government. It promotes understanding, trust and respect among peoples and countries on a remarkable scale. Its founder, Senator Fulbright, believed that “International education and exchange... can turn nations into peoples.” The Board believes that experiencing America outside the classroom is a core aspect of the Program.

The U.S. Congress funds Fulbright through an annual appropriation to the U.S. Department of State, which means that that the Program is supported by American citizens through their tax dollars. However, it is important to know that Fulbright is also supported by private entities and the governments of your countries—as well. This means that Fulbright is an international partnership between government agencies, private organizations, academic institutions, grantees, alumni, and volunteers throughout the world. All of these partners work together to ensure that the Fulbright Program remains strong and relevant in our rapidly changing world.

The founding legislation for the Fulbright Program established a 12 member Board from all backgrounds, appointed by the President of the United States. The Board is an independent, diverse, non-partisan body that supervises the Program, sets policies and procedures for its administration, and has final responsibility for the selection of all Fulbright grantees. The Board also promotes the Fulbright Program. We are always seeking ways to better engage people across this nation and around the world. In a moment, I'll tell you about two of the Board's key priorities and why they matter to you.

First, though, I must emphasize the crucial role that you play as Fulbright grantees and as alumni. While each of you pursues a specific teaching and academic project, your ultimate role as agents of positive change extends well beyond those pursuits. Beyond your own lives and careers, you have the opportunity to make a difference in your host communities, in your countries, and across the globe.

You can do so by reaching out and serving as leaders in your professions and societies, by saying 'yes' to invitations, including those you receive from

American Fulbright alumni who are eager to meet you. As you have no doubt discovered by now, there is a wide range of opportunities to volunteer and participate in activities at your host institutions and surrounding communities. Put down roots in your host community and be sure to *teach* while you *learn*!

We are proud to say that Fulbright alumni are in leadership positions in government, academia, business, the arts, sciences, media and many other fields — all serving as agents of positive change in the United States and around the world. Fulbright alumni include 43 Nobel Prize winners and 78 Pulitzer Prize recipients. (I am quite sure that we have some future ones in our midst!)

I promised to mention two of the Fulbright Board priorities, both of which are shared by the U.S. Department of State. The first is *to increase diversity in the Fulbright Program*. We understand that insufficient English language skills is a major obstacle to international participation in Fulbright. To address this need the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs has boosted the abilities of talented candidates in underserved sectors of the world to pursue graduate study as Fulbrighters by doubling support for long-term English programs in the United

States. Language study for Americans has also been increased in a variety of host countries.

The Fulbright Board reflects the cultural, racial, generational, and ability diversity of the US. Three members of the Fulbright Board are Fulbrighters, one member is blind, one is Hispanic, two are African Americans and over 50% are woman. We are educators, private sector and government employees and retirees. Our ages vary. I might be the oldest member, but you will never get me to admit it.

The second priority of the Board is to ensure *more robust Fulbright outreach* within this country and abroad as a means of highlighting the Program's impact and relevance to national and global security. In a special outreach initiative, the Board is serving as a catalyst and champion of *Fulbright storytelling* worldwide. In 2012 we launched a campaign to highlight the importance of "storytelling" – sharing and amplifying the discoveries, growth, experiences, encounters, pains, and triumphs of Fulbrighters around the globe.

As the author and literature professor Harold Clarke Goddard noted, “The destiny of the world is determined less by the battles that are lost and won than by the stories it loves and believes in.” Stories are indeed powerful. The Fulbright Board looks to help channel that positive power, through thousands of Fulbright voices, bringing forth stories that the world can love and believe in.

As Fulbrighters, you have extraordinary reach and the potential to affect hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people in your host and home communities. You understand the powerful intertwining of language and culture. We encourage you not only to seize every opportunity to share your Fulbright experiences via social media, “traditional” news media, or other means of presenting your culture to a host community group or introducing American culture to a community group in your country. Above all, we urge you to tell your story! through a YouTube video or a short story, or a poem, or a book about your adventures. Whether you write an essay, pen a letter, or send a postcard, tell your story!

We know that it is not always easy to tell good stories, but Fulbrighters, by definition, do have the advantage of having great material! You might keep in mind what Fulbrighter Rachel Smith told Chairman of the Fulbright Board Tom Healy last year: ***“Fulbright is not about changing the world,” she said, “It is about sharing the world.”*** We agree with Rachel and would urge you to think of “sharing” as being at the heart of the Fulbright Program.

Speaking of good storytelling, the current Annual Report of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, titled *“Celebrating Fulbright at 65: A Gift to the World,”* features great stories from - and about – Fulbrighters today and through the years. Check out on our website.

“Once a Fulbrighter, always a Fulbrighter.” What this means is that your Fulbright experience will remain with you for the rest of your life, not only with impact on your profession and in your memories, but also in your outlook on the world and in how you interact with others. The connections you make throughout your Fulbright experience – and beyond - are essential in fully realizing your talents, leadership potential and global responsibility as a Fulbright scholar. As you come to know each other and, later, as you encounter other

Fulbright alumni, you will gain a clearer sense of the Program's impact and potential.

To conclude I'll take a moment to say that I know that within your host community and culture, you are challenged at times, professionally and personally. However, if you keep an open mind and consider viewing those challenges as little gifts, life-changing gifts of your full Fulbright experience, you will grow into a stronger and wiser citizen of the world.

I leave you with the following wise words from W.E.B. Dubois:

“The main thing is the YOU beneath the clothes and skin - the ability to do, the will to conquer, the determination to understand and know this great, wonderful, curious world.

Thank you and if anyone has questions or comments, I would be happy to talk with you later in the evening.