



Yale College
Center for International & Professional Experience

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Zimbabwe

U.S Diplomacy in Harare

This summer, I worked for the U.S. State Department at the U.S. Embassy Harare. As an intern employed in the Political and Economic Office of the embassy, I wrote cables back to Washington D.C. on topics ranging from police reform to transgender rights in Zimbabwe, attended high court trials, state meetings and human rights forums as an embassy representative, and co-authored the annual congressionally-mandated human rights report for Zimbabwe. The highlight of my summer was organizing an internationally-televised debate between the Minister of Justice, Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, civil society representatives and the U.S. Ambassador about corruption and fiscal transparency. I was employed full time over the course of ten weeks.

I am interested in development economics, the politics of African regime change, and US foreign policy and made the goal to delve deeper in these subjects through my internship. Receiving this fellowship funding allowed me to pursue this goal as working at the embassy immersed me in the world of U.S. diplomacy, and Zimbabwean politics. I learned many lessons that will support me in a future career in and out of the office. In the midst of rapidly evolving political climates in Zimbabwe and the US, I worked in a high-pressure environment. As an embassy employee partially responsible for conveying the pulse of Zimbabwe to the US, I had to reconcile the theoretical questions learned through my schoolwork with practical questions like what responsibility the US has to encourage economic development and how we can best prevent political violence abroad. Additionally, I regularly faced situations that tested my adaptability. In rural areas where English isn't as widely spoken, I had to navigate language barriers. In the embassy, I quickly had to familiarize myself with the bureaucratic methods of the office.

Outside of the Political and Economic Section, I also was able to learn about the diverse work of the U.S. Embassy. Interacting with specialists from USAID, CDC, PEPFAR, the Regional Security Office, and Public Affairs Section introduced me to the important work that the U.S. does abroad and familiarized me with decision makers at the embassy. This will be very useful if I have a future career in the nonprofit or supranational world abroad where I will often have to work with diplomatic missions like the U.S. Embassy.

This internship supported my personal and career aspirations. My interests and experiences reflect my fundamental belief in human dignity and equity and ultimately, I hope to tackle challenges in active conflict zones like accountability for supranational armed forces, market development in refugee camps, and the inclusion of women in peace negotiations, through future government or non-profit work. I believe that working in Zimbabwe humbled and pushed me to see these multifaceted issues from an informed and grounded perspective. Working with the US State Department also helped me pursue these goals by establishing mentors and contacts who provided me perspective through their experience and give me a window into government function. These contacts, including my colleagues, supervisor, and representatives from other U.S. Embassy offices like USAID, have already been helpful in my search for an internship next summer, and have connected me with post-graduate opportunities in the foreign service.

Working at the embassy was also life-shaping in that it helped me think about my future career goals. I had not seriously considered a career in public service, or more specifically, the foreign service, before this summer. However, I thoroughly enjoyed the work I did daily in the office – from writing cables, to attending meetings, to meeting with Zimbabweans – and will now strongly consider taking the foreign service exam. The work is important for both Zimbabwe and the U.S. and working for the foreign service would be a meaningful and interesting career.

I am exceptionally grateful for this fellowship, as I would not have been able to accept this internship without funding support. I am thankful for John Heinz's leadership during his time as a public servant, and have gained even more respect for members of the public service who serve America and the American people each and every day at work after this summer. This summer was truly life-shaping and I owe it all to this fellowship!