

# Inside U.S. Foreign Policy

## U.S. Foreign Policy in North Africa and the Middle East

### Career Conversations Speaker Bios

#### Room 1: Pickering Fellowship



Salman Haji

*Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer in the Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy in Algiers*

Salman Haji is the Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer in the Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy in Algiers. His portfolio covers youth exchange and English programs as well as alumni support. He was most recently on his first tour as Vice Consul in Kingston, Jamaica. Prior to starting with the Department of State, Salman completed his graduate studies at American University and Koc University in Istanbul, Turkey. He speaks Arabic, French, Russian and Turkish and completed NSLI-Y and CLS programs in Egypt, Morocco and Jordan and studied at Sciences Po in France through a Gilman scholarship. Salman is originally from Tanzania but grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

#### Room 2: Joining the Civil Service & Experience as a Former Intern and Boren Fellow



Tasha Solomon

*Foreign Affairs Officer, Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs*

Tasha Solomon is a Foreign Affairs Officer in the Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs where she covers consular and law enforcement issues, human rights and religious affairs, post management issues, legislative affairs, and health. In 2015, she began her State Department career as a Graduate Intern in the Political-Military Section of the Office of Iraqi Affairs before joining the Office of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in 2016 as a Liaison Support Officer. She has a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations with a Middle East and North Africa Concentration from the University of Alabama and a Master of Arts from George Mason University in Middle East and Islamic Studies in 2017. She is also a Benjamin A. Gilman Scholar and National Security Education Program Boren Fellow, completing both programs in Amman, Jordan.

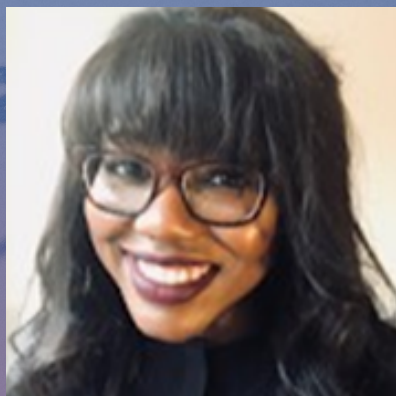


# Inside U.S. Foreign Policy

## U.S. Foreign Policy in North Africa and the Middle East

### Career Conversations Speaker Bios

#### Room 3: Journalism & Press Work



Jenny Abamu

*Public Diplomacy Information Officer, U.S. Consulate General Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*

Jenny Abamu is a U.S. Diplomat currently serving as the Public Diplomacy Information Officer for the U.S. Consulate General in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Jenny joined the U.S. Foreign Service from WAMU, the local NPR news station in Washington, D.C. There she worked as an education reporter, appearing on shows and producing local and national investigations. Her work has been nominated for multiple awards. She came to WAMU from EdSurge, where she had been a reporter focusing on K-12 education technology and was also the co-host of the podcast EdSurge On Air. She previously worked at Columbia University's EdLab in the Development and Research Group. In New York, Jenny also worked at NY1 News Channel as a field journalist, researcher, planner, and an overnight assignment editor. A native of Dallas, Texas, she has a bachelor's degree from Baylor University, and a master's in International and Comparative Education from Columbia University's Teacher's College.

#### Room 4: Perspective on the Civil vs. Foreign Service



Ryan Palsrok

*Consular Section Chief, U.S. Mission to Morocco*

Ryan Palsrok is Consular Section Chief for the U.S. Mission to Morocco. Prior to this position, he served as the Chief of Immigrant Visas and American Citizen Services in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic and as the Assistant Director of the New York Passport Agency from 2012-2015. Having worked for the State Department since 2004, he also previously managed American Citizen Services in Beijing, China and spent six years in the Department's Office of Children's Issues. In 2009, Ryan launched a public affairs campaign for the Department aimed at better preparing U.S. college students for a safe experience overseas. Originally from Hawaii, Ryan is a graduate of Middlebury College in Vermont.



# Inside U.S. Foreign Policy

## U.S. Foreign Policy in North Africa and the Middle East

### Career Conversations Speaker Bios

#### Room 5: Working in the Foreign Service



Brinille E. Ellis

*Deputy Director, Office of Public Diplomacy, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs*

Brinille E. Ellis serves as a Deputy Director for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Public Diplomacy. Prior to this, she served as the Counselor for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania. She joined the Foreign Service in 1997 as a diplomatic security officer and became a Foreign Service Officer in 2002. Brinille has also served in Senegal, Haiti, Brussels, Turkey, and in Pakistan. In Washington, she served in the Bureau of European Affairs' Office of Public Diplomacy and in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Policy Office. Brinille holds a dual B.A. degree in Literature & Rhetoric and in French from Binghamton University, an MPA from The George Washington University and has studied at The Sorbonne in Paris. Brinille speaks French, Italian, Turkish and Urdu. She is a native New Yorker and enjoys fine art photography, American art history and decorative arts.

#### Room 6: Rangel Fellowship Program & Peace Corps



Amanda Zeidan

*Political Officer, U.S. Embassy Rabat*

Amanda Zeidan is a second tour Political Officer in Rabat, Morocco. Amanda focuses on Human Rights. Before arriving in Morocco, Amanda served in Guinea, Conakry for her first tour. She speaks, Arabic, French, and Turkish. Amanda is a Rangel Fellow with previous experience working for the Carter Center, Department of the Treasury, and Senator Harry Reid. She was inspired to apply for the Foreign Service during her time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Azerbaijan.



# Inside U.S. Foreign Policy

## U.S. Foreign Policy in North Africa and the Middle East

### Career Conversations Speaker Bios

#### Room 7: Life in the Foreign Service



Stephen Weeks

*Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Rabat*

Stephen Weeks is the Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Rabat, responsible for the professional and academic exchange programs, cultural heritage preservation, university partnerships, and other portfolios. He joined the Foreign Service in 2008, and in addition to Morocco, has served in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan, and Trinidad. He speaks French and Arabic. Prior to becoming a Diplomat, Steve worked as a freelance writer, editor, and media consultant in New York, Washington, and Paris. He worked on the staff of several national and local publications, and his journalism has been published in The New York Times, City Journal, Spy magazine, and other magazines and newspapers. A native New Yorker, Steve is married and has three children.



# Inside U.S. Foreign Policy

## U.S. Foreign Policy in North Africa and the Middle East

### Career Conversations Speaker Bios

#### Room 8: State Department Study Abroad and Exchange Opportunities



Theresa Gagnon

*Gilman Program Officer, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs*

Ms. Theresa Gagnon serves as a Program Officer in the USA Study Abroad Branch of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State in Washington D.C. She is responsible for managing the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program and is the USA Study Abroad Branch's liaison for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. Theresa is a Civil Service Officer and has been with the Department of State since 2010. Prior to joining ECA, she was a senior analyst in the Strategic Planning and Analysis Division of the Office of Inspector General. She previously worked on strategic planning, evaluation, and resource management issues in the Bureau of Budget and Planning, and helped implement recommendations from the first Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review during her temporary service in the office of the Deputy Secretary of State. Before joining the Department, Theresa taught English language and American culture in rural Spain through the Auxiliares de Conversación Program, managed by the Spanish Ministry of Education. She is originally from Seattle, WA, and is a graduate of the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University, where she spent her junior year studying Latin American Politics and Spanish language in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



# Inside U.S. Foreign Policy

## U.S. Foreign Policy in North Africa and the Middle East

### Career Conversations Speaker Bios

#### Room 9: Economic/Commercial Work



Amanda Beck

*Economic Officer, U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan*

Amanda Beck is an Economic Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan, covering finance, banking, and sanctions issues. Prior to Amman, she served in the Political and Economic Section at the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia, Cyprus, first as Deputy Political Chief and later as Assistance Coordinator during the 2015-16 Cyprus settlement talks. At the State Department headquarters, she worked as a Desk Officer in the Office of Pakistan Affairs and the Office of the Coordinator for Assistance to Europe and Eurasia. Her first assignment was as consular officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil, Ecuador. A San Diego native, she holds a B.S. in International Politics from Georgetown University and an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management.