

Ndaya Cynthia Malambi

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador

France, 2018



“One of the most important takeaways I had from my study abroad experience is that the world is small. We have more in common than we think and when people see that you are interested in their culture, they become more interested in yours.”

Ndaya Cynthia studied abroad as a Gilman scholar during the 2018-2019 academic year at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Rennes in Rennes, France. Her time in France showed her how important it is to represent a different face of America. As a first-generation immigrant, Ndaya Cynthia's interactions with people of diaspora in France demonstrated the impact of representation because they saw a similarity of experience and a relatability to her when discussing topics of migration, diaspora engagement, and political participation. Additionally, she had known since high school that she wanted to travel and study abroad, so being in France fulfilled her dream and increased her passion for cultural exchange.

Ndaya Cynthia credits her Gilman Program experience for providing important interactions that enabled her to spot a gap in how her home state of Rhode Island integrates refugee students. The gap inspired her to start an initiative where she engages with different organizations in the state to build a training program that equips teachers and educators to meet the needs of refugee students. Applying for a Gilman Scholarship also provided a template that Ndaya Cynthia used when she applied for a Fulbright U.S. Student Program Award. She was selected as a finalist and completed a master's degree in conflict and development studies at Ghent University in Belgium. Ndaya Cynthia's research focused on the Congolese diaspora, and she is working on publishing her thesis.

Ndaya Cynthia has continued her engagement with the Gilman Program and the opportunities it offers for Gilman alumni. She participated in the U.S. Future Leaders Topical Seminar on Entrepreneurship and Innovation hosted by the University of Texas-Austin in 2019 and in the Foreign Policy in Focus: Refugees and Migration Overseas Seminar in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 2023. Ndaya Cynthia is excited to be a Gilman Alumni Ambassador and inspire young people to study abroad. She is passionate about introducing them to resources that will not only alleviate their financial burdens but also open doors to rooms they did not think were possible to be in.

- Hometown: Providence, Rhode Island
- Earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science and French from the University of Rhode Island (2020) and a Master of Science in conflict and development studies from Ghent University (2021)
- Fulbright U.S. Student Program Study/Research Award Belgium, 2020-2021
- Participated in the Gilman Program's U.S. Future Leaders Topical Seminar on Entrepreneurship and Innovation hosted by the University of Texas-Austin and the Foreign Policy in Focus: Refugees and Migration Overseas Seminar in Thessaloniki, Greece

