

# COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

## *Workshop Summary Report* Conference in Diversity in International Affairs

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### **CFR Conference on Diversity in International Affairs**

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), along with the Global Access Pipeline (GAP) and the International Career Advancement Program (ICAP), hosted the Conference on Diversity in International Affairs in Washington, DC, on April 10–11, 2015. The goal of the conference, part of CFR's Expanded Diversity Initiative in Foreign Policy, was to connect professionals and students from diverse backgrounds to career opportunities in international affairs. The following sections summarize the keynote address and the two plenary sessions.

#### *SESSION ONE*

##### **A Conversation With Carla Harris**

The conference opened with welcoming remarks from James M. Lindsay, senior vice president, director of studies, and Maurice R. Greenberg chair at CFR. Carla Harris, vice chairman of global management, managing director, and senior client advisor at Morgan Stanley, and chair of the National Women's Business Council, spoke at the opening session. Elizabeth Dahan, director at Macro Advisory Partners, presided over the session.

Harris discussed her thoughts on the “success equation,” or how to maximize one's professional success. She spoke about three important points: two from her book *Expect to Win* and one from her book *Strategize to Win*. Harris's first piece of advice was that “perception is the copilot to reality. How people perceive you will directly impact how they deal with you.” She followed up by explaining that the audience should strive to work in a manner that is consistent with the way a particular organization evaluates success.

Harris's second piece of advice focused on the importance of learning what actions are necessary to succeed professionally and focusing on successfully completing those actions. Harris emphasized that participants should strive for excellent performance in the work place and develop strong professional relationships in

order to maximize success. Her last piece of advice for the audience was to be comfortable taking professional risks to achieve their goals. She added that “if you consider yourself a leader in the twenty-first century, you must be comfortable taking risks.”

Dahan began by asking Harris about her view on the business case for diversity. Harris emphasized that the business case for diversity lies in that fact that business today revolves around innovation. Innovative ideas come from working with different kinds of people, said Harris, with different experiences and perspectives. She added, “If you need a lot of different experiences in the room by definition you have to have a lot of different people in the room because experiences come from people.”

Dahan then asked Harris to discuss what a sponsor is and how it relates to the term “mentor.” Harris discussed the concepts of advisor, mentor, and sponsor. She described an advisor as someone to whom the participants may ask discrete questions. Harris characterized a mentor as someone with whom the participants may share the intimate details of their career. She explained a sponsor as the person that will be vocal and active in support for the participants’ professional growth in contexts such as raises and promotions. The discussion concluded with Harris briefly discussing networking. She emphasized the importance of following up with someone after receiving their business card at a networking event.

## *SESSION TWO*

### **World Economic Update**

Jerry Lavell Johnson, founding member and managing director of RLJ Equity Partners, and Karen H. Johnson, independent consultant and former director of the division of international finance at the Federal Reserve System, spoke at the first plenary session on the second day of the conference. David Trulio, director of operations at Raytheon International, Inc., presided over the session.

The session began with Trulio asking Karen Johnson to briefly speak about the current status of the global economy with a focus on globalization and the recent financial crisis. Karen Johnson discussed some ways in which globalization has created a more interconnected global economy. She stressed that the recent financial crisis was different from past crises. In the past, financial crises began in developing countries, but the recent crisis began and largely unfolded in advanced economies. Trulio followed up by asking Jerry Johnson to discuss his reflections on the recent financial crisis. The latter responded by briefly describing his company and the effects of the crisis on his work investing in microeconomies. Jerry Johnson noted that, from an economic perspective, this is a great time for young people to identify areas or regions of the world that they are interested in or passionate about.

Trulio went on to ask the speakers to point out the economic indicators or trends—in addition to currency, commodity prices, and recent jobs reports—that are noteworthy today. Karen Johnson noted the low interest rates in the global economy. She emphasized that low interest rates were necessary for the world economy to recover from the financial crisis. Jerry Johnson discussed the importance of the sectors that are currently experiencing vast growth, such as technology, as well as the relevance of cyber threats and cybersecurity.

Trulio asked Karen Johnson to discuss debt, including government debt, student debt, and household debt. Karen Johnson emphasized that what the debt financed influences how the debt should be evaluated and if

it is beneficial or not. The speakers offered their thoughts regarding the areas that young people should focus on in today's global economy. Jerry Johnson said that the U.S. and global economies will experience a lot of growth in the technology sector, and he encouraged young people to find opportunities in that field. Karen Johnson explained that the services industry is the field of the future. She emphasized that it is no longer possible to develop a career in the manufacturing industry but that "services are going to occupy the future." Karen Johnson added that there are host of global governance problems that impede the recovery of the global economy. She noted that global governance is an area that has limitless opportunities for professional growth.

The session closed with Trulio asking the speakers to discuss what diversity means and why it matter in the global economy. Karen Johnson discussed the rise of Asia, Africa, and South America, and their increasingly central roles in the global economy. She added that diversity in the world's economies will continue to rise and emphasized the importance of treating all people, here in the United States and abroad, with dignity and respect. Jerry Johnson explained that he views diversity through four different lenses: integrity, inclusion, growth, and as a competitive advantage. He emphasized that as the world economy grows, it will be important to have the ability to understand different perspectives.

## *CONCLUSION*

### **How to Get a Global Education**

Edith Bartley, vice president of government affairs at the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and Anya Schmemann, assistant dean of the School of International Service at American University, spoke at the closing plenary session on the second day of the conference. Charles Landow, director of education content at the Council on Foreign Relations, presided over the session.

Landow began the session asking the speakers what a global education is and what skills it entails. Bartley said that everyone is a global citizen and a lifelong learner. She noted the importance of having friends of diverse backgrounds and understanding different perspectives. Schmemann pointed out that any education in this day and age is a global education because of the interconnectedness of today's world. Landow followed up by asking about some ways in which global events and phenomena have connected people today in ways they did not before. Bartley commented on how technology can connect students from all over the world. She noted it is important to find graduate programs that are innovative and interconnected globally. Schmemann discussed the various pathways to graduate school. "This is really an incredible time to be a student," said Schmemann. "There are so many opportunities to advance your own education." Landow then inquired if an understanding of international affairs may be successfully applied to other fields such as law or business. Schmemann replied that joint degrees have become increasingly popular because students want to be competitive in a global environment.

The discussion turned to building the skills that come from working with people from diverse backgrounds. Bartley said that people should learn a second language and emphasized the importance of being open minded about career decisions and being professional at networking. Schmemann added that one can obtain an international experience in Washington, DC, by visiting embassies, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the U.S. Department of State. She encouraged students to be savvy

shoppers when choosing a graduate program as every program has different strengths and areas of expertise.

Schmemmann and Bartley also discussed mentoring and career development. Bartley highlighted the importance of securing lifelong mentors and for mentees to also serve as a resource for their mentors. Schmemmann stressed that students today have more experiences and know exactly what they want from their graduate school experience. Bartley added, "Be your own CEO. You are your company. Think about who you want to engage with." Landow followed up by asking the speakers to discuss how young professionals in foreign policy should balance specializing in a field versus generalizing in one. Schmemmann mentioned that employers really value basic skills like writing, analytical reasoning, and being able to communicate well. She added that it is not necessary to be a specialist in a certain field because, today, young people move from field to field and company to company. Bartley stated that it is both important to specialize and have a broader understanding of other issues.

The session concluded with a discussion about the changes in graduate programs to accommodate nontraditional students. Both Schmemmann and Bartley noted that many degree programs offer online classes and degree programs. Schmemmann emphasized that increasingly students can pursue their graduate education on their own terms such as obtaining a degree online or part-time. The speakers agreed that there are fewer barriers today to acquiring a graduate degree than in the past.