



2014-2015 class meets with President Obama

I was once told that a room changes when the President of the United States walks through the door. After meeting with President Obama for a wide-ranging discussion about his life, governing, and leadership, I can confirm this is true.

On May 7th my colleagues and I sat in the Roosevelt Room for a rare and unique privilege: no White House staff, no media, no talking points, no filter -- an uninterrupted hour with the President of the United States.

After brief introductions and a few kind opening remarks where President Obama emphasized a commitment to service throughout our lives, we dove into questions. How does he reconcile his personal views with the responsibility of appealing to and leading a diverse constituency? What is his decision-making process and how has this changed since entering office? How does he think about building teams? What routines and practices does he keep on a daily and weekly basis? What does it really mean *to him* to be our nation's first African American President, and how has this milestone shaped our national conversation on race?

We had spent all year preparing and there was no shortage of questions.

The President spoke eloquently and passionately and called on us, as Fellows, to use our lives not to become a title, but rather to pursue achiev-



The 2014-2015 White House Fellows with President Obama in the Oval Office.

ing something for others. With this purpose as our north star to guide us, the President said, we would find clarity even when the decisions become complex. It was helpful and timely advice.

Throughout the conversation the President seamlessly shifted between his roles as Mr. Obama, a father of two and former professor; and President Obama our leader and Commander in Chief who cares deeply about the future of America to articulate his points. We were inspired, and after gathered in the Oval Office for a photo together. It was the perfect compliment to an incredible year and a day we will always remember.

BY JACOB DONNELLY
U.S. Department of State

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Commissioners, Alumni, Fellows and Friends,

What an incredible summer this has been for the White House Fellows program! In the past few months, we have had a policy trip to New York City, selected a new class of White House Fellows, hosted a Closing Ceremony for the 2014-2015 class, and met with leaders such as White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro, and CIA Director John Brennan. Many of the Fellows have had exciting placement experiences this year ranging from increasing broadband access to individuals and families living in public housing to expanding the U.S. economic relationship with West Africa.

Summer for the program is always bittersweet as we bid farewell to the current class and prepare for the incoming Fellows. I want to offer my sincere congratulations to the 2014-2015 class and their families. We have truly enjoyed getting to know each of them. We are excited to welcome the 2015-2016 Fellows who represent a diverse set of professions, including military, business, law, medicine, and local government, and are from San Francisco to Miami and everywhere in between. We have been fortunate to have great interest from departments, agencies, and offices across the Administration, and we look forward to a year of strong placements.

This fall is a very special time for the White House Fellows program as we celebrate our 50th anniversary at the 2015 Leadership Conference on October 22-24, 2015. This will be a wonderful time for the Fellows family to come together in celebration of this remarkable program.

As we wind down the summer, we look ahead to the 2016-2017 class—the final class of Fellows in the Obama Administration. In November 2015, we will open the application once more. Please stay tuned for information to share with your networks. I hope you will encourage the exceptional leaders in your lives to apply to the Fellowship!

Warmest regards,

Jenny



The 2014-2015 class meets with Michael Bloomberg at Bloomberg Philanthropies during their policy trip to New York City.

New York Policy Trip

From June 22-24, the Fellows traveled to New York City for the final policy trip of our fellowship year. New York provided a unique opportunity to dive into a variety of policy areas – government, education, finance, housing, and philanthropy – stretch our worldviews, and explore the richness and challenges of a city described by many as the cultural and financial capital of the world.

Our trip was jammed-packed with experiences as diverse as the city itself. As the elevator quickly ascended 50+ floors to the office of the CEO of JP Morgan Chase, I reflected on the stark contrast of my whereabouts less than a year earlier when I was living and working in South Sudan, an oil-rich but poverty-stricken nation. Our discussion with Jamie Dimon raised questions for me of our increasingly interconnected global economy and the political and policy changes needed to close disparity gaps.

A personal highlight of the NY trip was our meeting with U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara who discussed joining a lawsuit first filed by inmates of Rikers Island (NYC's main jail complex) who alleged they had been beaten by officers. The case resulted in sweeping reforms to address the abuse and neglect of prisoners. His actions to pursue challenging cases inspire me to not shy away from tackling thorny public policy issues.

Visiting the 9/11 Memorial Site with Brenda Berkman (WHF 1996-97), a member of the White House Fellows family, was particularly poignant. Berkman, a pioneering female firefighter, was among the first responders to the World Trade Center attacks. As we walked upon the hallowed ground, we took to heart her stories of courage and compassion as well as the emotional toll 9/11 had on her colleagues who continue to grieve for those lost.

Two United Nations Youth Ambassadors greeted us warmly at the U.N. They excitedly gave us a tour and discussed their roles of representing U.S. youth at various interna-

tional forums. The Fellows then met with Ambassador Samantha Power who was on the cusp of a Security Council session. She vividly described the U.S. government's efforts to combat Ebola, refraining to mention her courageous role as the first member of the Cabinet to visit West Africa during the height of the epidemic. I admire her passion to continually highlight the human dimension of disease, conflict, and unrest – whether in Syria, the Central African Republic, or Ukraine – as well as her perseverance in applying her role as U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. to effect positive change.

In quite literally a different field altogether, the Fellows were challenged to think about the contractual demands of managing a pro-baseball team. After a tour chronicling Major League Baseball's most storied stadium, Lonnie Trost, COO and General Counsel for the New York Yankees, regaled us with moments from his colorful career. We all gained a new appreciation of the legal complexities and operational challenges of managing this multi-billion dollar enterprise. The entire experience was definitely a homerun memory!

I left New York with a grateful heart – appreciative for the extraordinary people we met and all that we learned and experienced together – incredible memories to treasure of our Fellowship year!



The 2014-2015 White House Fellows at the United Nations during their policy trip to New York.

BY MEGAN CARROLL
U.S. Department of State

The Value of Collaboration

Throughout the year, our seminar speakers shared with us how collaboration – between people, agencies, and the public and private sectors – helped them transcend individual limits, allowing them to create and sustain something greater than any one office or agency. We had the good fortune of putting some of their lessons to practice and seeing these results, firsthand, when together we helped lead the design and launch of a new Presidential initiative to narrow the digital divide: ConnectHome.

Our work started early in the Fellowship year, as we were both brainstorming projects to take on from the White House’s National Economic Council and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. We decided that building on the progress of ConnectED – the Administration’s plan to connect 99 percent of America’s students to broadband in their classrooms and libraries over the next five years – by ensuring that the most vulnerable kids have Internet at home, was both critically important and an ideal challenge for two White House Fellows. From designing the public-private partnership model to pitching our principals on the initiative and developing a strategy for implementation, we worked together every step of the way – and saw our program launched by President Obama on July 15th, when he announced that public housing residents in 28 communities would soon have low-cost, high-speed In-

ternet at home.

Ultimately, uniting around a common set of goals and seeing ConnectHome from concept to reality was easy because our partnership was built on the trust and mutual respect established and strengthened over the course of the Fellowship. And it confirmed what our speakers told us all along: Only by learning from and leaning on each other could we create a program that, for years to come, promises to be transformational for tens of thousands of kids, across America.



BY ANDREW BUHER,
*U.S. Department of Housing and
Urban Development &
MARISA PORGES, National
Economic Council*

Placement Report

This past year has been a period of transition in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I have had the privilege of working for both Secretary Chuck Hagel and now Ashton Carter, supporting the transition between their leadership teams, and working on a wide range of challenges involving the Ebola response, personnel and readiness issues, health care programs, technology, defense innovation, and the Asia-Pacific region.

Since taking the oath to become the 25th Secretary of Defense in February, Secretary Carter has moved quickly to address the many well-established national security and organizational challenges confronting the Department of Defense today. At the same time, he is also preparing the Pentagon for the future.

In April, I accompanied Secretary Carter to Silicon Valley, where he announced new initiatives to strengthen and build new partnerships between the Defense Department and technology innovators. Meeting with entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and veterans now working for high-tech companies, as well as listening to their perspectives on barriers to collaboration with the federal government, was highly informative. Secretary Carter is committed to ensuring that the best ideas, innovations, and talent continue to reach the Department of Defense, and these efforts were only the beginning.

Secretary Carter is also advancing the next phase of the Asia-Pacific rebalance by modernizing and strengthening U.S. alliances in the region. Later in the spring, I had the privilege of traveling

with him to the U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Pacific Fleet change-of-command ceremonies in Honolulu, the Shangri-La Dialogue (Asia Security Summit) in Singapore, Vietnam, and India, as well as the U.S. Africa and European Command headquarters, in Germany. I had the honor of meeting with sailors, airmen, marines, military spouses, ambassadors, and foreign leaders. At every stop, Secretary Carter reiterated the Department's commitment to sustaining not only U.S. global leadership in the 21st century, but also a regional security architecture enabling freedom, peace, prosperity, and security for all nations.

I have always known and believe even more strongly today that our service members and national security leaders sacrifice greatly to defend our nation. They are doing so now while also preparing to execute the missions of tomorrow.

BY EDWARD SHEEN

U.S. Department of Defense



Edward Sheen during a trip with Secretary Carter to New Delhi, India.

An Evening at Gibson Dunn

On Tuesday June 2, 2015, our class was invited to the law firm of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP to meet the new summer associates and to hear from Partner Ted Olson, a White House Fellowship Commissioner, and Senior of Counsel Ambassador Ron Kirk, husband of White House Fellows Commissioner Matrice Ellis-Kirk. The topic for the evening was a discussion of civil rights and Ted Olson's incredible work in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, the landmark federal trial that declared Proposition 8, which outlawed same sex marriage in California, unconstitutional.

The event, which was beautifully managed by Ms. Zakiyyah Salim-Williams, Chief Diversity Officer at Gibson Dunn, involved a discussion between Ambassador Kirk and Mr. Olson about the Prop 8 case, and screening of excerpts from an upcoming documentary on the case. The evening discussion provided a host of different perspectives on the same case, all with insights and experience that painted an in-depth and moving picture of the trial as it unfolded. Mr. Olson was able to discuss the legal strategy, while his wife Lady Olson spoke about her experience as a spectator during the entire trial. Associates who worked on the case also spoke briefly about their contributions to this pivotal civil rights case. One of the two couples who were plaintiffs in the case were also present to speak to their experience. Finally, Ambassador Kirk, as the moderator, reflected on the case in the context of the civil rights movement more generally.

The event was truly moving. Mr. Olson's dedication to this virtuous cause is laudable, and all the Fellows were emotionally touched by the experience, and grateful to Gibson Dunn for including us in the night.

BY LINDSAY RODMAN
National Security Council



Left: Ted Olson and Ambassador Ron Kirk with the 2014-215 White House Fellows at Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP.

Education Report

SPEAKER SEMINARS

- ◆ Eric Holder, Attorney General of the United States
- ◆ Jeffrey Zients, Director of the National Economic Council
- ◆ Jon Finer, Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of State
- ◆ Donald Rumsfeld, The Rumsfeld Foundation
- ◆ Megan Smith, Chief Technology Office at the White House
- ◆ Charles Bolden, Administrator of NASA
- ◆ Penny Pritzker, Secretary of Commerce
- ◆ Barack Obama, President of the United States
- ◆ Anthony Foxx, Secretary of Transportation
- ◆ Elaine Chao, Distinguished Fellow, Heritage Foundation
- ◆ John McCain, U.S. Senator
- ◆ Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Secretary of Health and Human Services
- ◆ Richard Stengell, Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs
- ◆ Judge Richard Leon and John Podesta
- ◆ Julian Castro, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

- ◆ Ashton Carter, Secretary of Defense
- ◆ Heather Higginbottom, Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources
- ◆ John Brennan, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
- ◆ Denis McDonough, White House Chief of Staff
- ◆ Rosie Rios, Treasurer of the United States
- ◆ David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States
- ◆ Bob McDonald, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs
- ◆ Jack Lew, Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Treasury
- ◆ Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to President Obama

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NEW YORK CITY POLICY TRIP

- ◆ Meeting with Abby Joseph Cohen, President of the Global Markets Institute, Goldman Sachs
- ◆ Visit to Harlem Children's Zone and meeting with Anne Williams-Isom and senior leadership team
- ◆ Meeting with NYC Schools Chancellor Carmen Farina
- ◆ Meeting with Preet Bharara, U.S.

Attorney

- ◆ Meeting with Deputy Mayor Richard Buery
- ◆ Meeting with Patti Harris, CEO of Bloomberg Philanthropies
- ◆ Meeting with Jamie Dimon, Chairman, President, and CEO of JP Morgan Chase
- ◆ Visit to the United Nations and meeting with Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson

SPECIAL EVENTS

- ◆ Dinner and discussion about Prop. 8, hosted by Ted Olson and Ron Kirk
- ◆ Congressional Baseball Game at Nationals Park
- ◆ Summer Event on the White House South Lawn
- ◆ Placement Week Reception with incoming class of Fellows
- ◆ Transition Dinner hosted by the Alumni Association
- ◆ Farewell Party hosted by David Moore and Stefanie Sanford

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- ◆ Arlington Wreath Laying Ceremony
- ◆ Urban Alliance
- ◆ Age in Place



Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro with the 2014-2015 White House Fellows in front of 712 Jackson Place.



White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough with the 2014-2015 White House Fellows in front of 712 Jackson Place.

Help us recruit the next class!

There are still many ways you can get involved with the program. Here are five things you can do to help us reach potential applicants:

1. **Engage One-on-One.** Identify exceptional individuals who could become White House Fellows and encourage them to apply.
2. **Send an Email.** Please share information with your professional and social networks.
3. **Utilize Social Media.** Post messages promoting the program to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. using #WHFellows #BecomeaWHF #WHFellowsat50
4. **Sponsor an Event.** Consider hosting an outreach event. White House Fellows program staff will lend support and provide background materials.
5. **Leverage Earned Media.** We invite you to submit op-eds, contribute to news stories, and/or author blog posts to share your experiences with the White House Fellows program.

Thank you from the Fellows Office

- ◆ We would like to thank our Summer 2015 interns, Katherine Perry and Carleigh McFarlane. They were instrumental in our selection and placement efforts and we will miss them very much!
- ◆ We appreciate the Commissioners and their support for the White House Fellows and program.
- ◆ We are grateful to the White House Fellows Foundation and Association for its ongoing investment in the program's success.
- ◆ We would like to extend our gratitude to David Moore and Stefanie Sanford for hosting two incredible events for the incoming and outgoing classes of Fellows.
- ◆ We are thankful to the University Club of Washington, DC for hosting our July Class Reception where the incoming and outgoing classes of Fellows had the opportunity to meet.
- ◆ We are grateful to the placement principals and White House Liaisons for their support of the Fellows throughout the year.
- ◆ We would like to thank our numerous hosts during the New York policy trip for their incredible contributions to the Fellows' experience.
- ◆ Finally, but importantly, we extend a genuine thank-you to the St. Regis Hotel and its staff for hosting an incredibly successful Selection Weekend.



The 2014-2015 White House Fellows at the Moore's home during their farewell celebration.



The 2014-2015 White House Fellows and the 2015-2016 White House Fellows at the University Club of Washington, DC during the July Class Reception.

About the WHF Program

The White House Fellows program is a nonpartisan program that offers exceptional young leaders firsthand experience working at the highest levels of the Federal government. **For more information, please visit:** www.whitehouse.gov/fellows

Please send any comments, questions, or other newsletter related communication to: whitehousefellows@whf.eop.gov

