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### Workplace Interview Reflection

Democracy OnAir is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that seeks to engage voters and both the local and national population with their representatives and local/state governments. Beginning this internship, I started under the position of “Content Curator Intern” meaning I would focus on uploading the proper information on the websites or “Hubs” as Democracy OnAir refers to them as well as interviewing local/state politicians. The process, I have learned, has not only encouraged myself to learn more about local politics but is also a great avenue of information for those to become notified about changes in laws and positions in their communities. For example, one of my assignments was to watch the Virginia Senate and House general sessions and take note of laws being passed for the state. From that one experience alone, I garnered so much information that will affect me in the coming years such as changes to traffic laws, taxes, and voting information. It was also a great way for me to connect with other members of Virginia OnAir (the local Democracy OnAir hub that I worked on) and learn more about their roles and motivations for their positions.

One of the supervisors I had the opportunity to interview was the technology director for Democracy OnAir who has worked with their local Hub for two years. What was most interesting about Shuaib is that he began his relationship with Democracy OnAir through a senior capstone from George Mason University where he was studying Information Technology. Through the interview with Shuaib I was able to learn vital information both about his position

but the context of Democracy OnAir as a whole. I have learned through my Global Politics Classes, specifically “Democratization”, that in order for a State to be considered a democracy it has to possess certain values such as free and fair elections, access to information about constituents, and certain liberties for their citizens. Through Shuaib’s interview, we talked more about the connection of democracy and Dem OnAir’s purpose. Shuaib highlighted that the primary purpose of Dem OnAir is to encourage civic engagement because elections are so very few and far between that the process between them is as important as the election itself. This brought to me the idea of transparency which is also emphasized many times in our discussions in GPF classes. State elections without transparency risk the ruination of the title “Democracy” because it allows citizens to be uninformed and create an almost elitist form of government, an enemy of free and fair representation.

Shuaib and I’s conversation also lead to the idea of implementing the idea of Democracy OnAir in foreign territories and the benefits and negatives to that proposition. Shuaib highlighted that the encouragement of civic engagement in foreign countries would definitely be beneficial as it would allow further invisibility in the legislative side of government. While the process itself might have bumps in the road due to the complexity of foreign territory’s governments, the benefits are innumerable. This allowed me to reflect on the process of democratization not just what I read in my textbook but in real life applications. By allowing citizens this access to local government, not just national, it can create voter confidence and even a change in governmental workings within foreign territories. Perhaps a candidate was not forthcoming on their position on a divisive subject, well the Democracy OnAir website would highlight that or create more of a “buzz” surrounding it and influence local citizens to either get that answer from the candidate,

thus creating more visibility in local elections, or vote for another candidate who is forthcoming of their information.

The interview with Shuaib definitely highlights the prospects and the benefits of increasing civic engagement, especially with college age students who make up a large proportion of American voters in the system. One thing I learned from and reflected on most was the importance of keeping up with local politics, not just in time for the elections, but during the entire process. Important pieces of legislation that get voted on could affect a citizen and unbeknownst to them help or harm them unless they were keen to learn more information daily about their local legislative community.

Along the interview process, I also had the opportunity to interview Kerrie who is the Outreach Manager for Virginia OnAir, a more direct process to my internship as I mainly focus on Virginia OnAir as well. The interesting thing about Kerrie is that she also was a GPF intern who found her position in the company by going through the same process as myself, becoming an intern for GPF, working as a Content Curator Intern, and then being offered a full-time position. Kerrie and I delved more into the process of what got her to her position today as well as key aspects and advice for college students in the government process.

Kerrie actually started as a Biology major at George Mason University but through the 2016 election, a passion for her own perspective on policy developed and she ended up switching her major to Global Affairs and finishing with a minor in Biology. What was most interesting about this is that I think a lot of students around my age found their passion for policy or maybe just their interest in the news through the 2016 presidential election which was divisive all on its own and drew out opinions from everyone. Kerrie and I both talked about the GPF intern process and how the fellowship itself allowed us to view politics as more of a global centered process

instead of American-centered which arguably our Kindergarten through High School education relies on heavily. This was easily connected to the classes I have been taking such as Human Rights and International Law because you learn quite fast that the United States is just an actor on the international level and not what international law and rights is based upon. In fact, many times throughout my classes I have learned that the US actually played a role in not getting legislation acted upon that could better the international level such as not ratifying the Kyoto Protocol which many say is central to international global warming health.

Furthermore, Kerrie and I discussed the advice for potential students in politics or just those that have very little idea on how to involve themselves in politics. Her advice was simple and straight to the point yet very effective, "If you find one thing you are passionate about, learn about something political or policy wise that goes along with that." In her own example, Kerrie was passionate about biology and environmental changes such as global warming so to forge her own avenue into local politics she looked into environmental policies which lead her to develop an interest in politics and eventually a career in it.

Through these interviews I learned a very interesting concept about politics, whether it be local or national or even international. I learned that no matter what perspective you take on them or what career path you are interested in, local and national politics will affect that. This means that it is very important to stay up to date on these policy changes because whether you are a farmer in Georgia, a teacher in Massachusetts, a scientist in New York, or a stay at home parent in Arizona, legislative changes will impact you. It is vital to the democratic process that information is accessible and available to local populations at all time and that we can find our voice through local politics, not thinking it is an elite group of Senators, but an accessible group of our own representatives whose job it is to voice our opinion even louder.

While I personally have no political ambitions myself, I have always saw myself as an international lawyer in the public sector so classes such as Human Rights and International Law were vital to my own career. However through this internship as well as the Global Politics Fellowship itself I have learned that the career path I chose is interconnected with the political process and the process of democratization and international law and human rights. Everything has a connection so by being informed of my own political processes in my local community, it will train me for the day that I need to learn multiple political processes in different States.