

Letter to the editor:

Celebrating the Legacy of Senator Fulbright

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James William Fulbright was born in Summer, Missouri, on April 9th, 1905. 41 years later, he founded one of the most successful and fruitful exchange initiatives in academia: the Fulbright program. In 2017, we celebrated 60 years of the Fulbright Commission in Ecuador, with this issue of Vínculos as one of the ways to highlight this accomplishment. Between 1946 and today lies a legacy that can be summarized as one of the world's foremost educational exchange programs: a program of 73 years, 155 countries, and close to 300,000 Fulbright alumni.

When Senator Fulbright proposed a program that would bring “a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs,” the international community was just looking back on decades of violence, and two World Wars that left large parts of the world scarred. But his words are still wise advice for us today, and I would like to invite you and the readers of Vínculos to reflect with me on how we can honor Senator Fulbright's legacy and words.

The international exchanges facilitated and funded by the Fulbright Program have brought more than just a little more knowledge to all corners of the world. In my field of structural engineering, the development and use of prestressed concrete after the Second World War was a major achievement – and one of

the key players here, who developed methods for the design of prestressed concrete structures, was T.Y. Lin. In 1953, an American student named T.Y. Lin received a Fulbright scholarship to study with Prof. Gustave Magnel at Ghent University in Belgium. Prof. Magnel was one of the pioneers of prestressed concrete in Europe. T.Y. Lin learned from him, applied this knowledge to projects in the USA, and developed design methods for prestressed concrete. The impact of just this one Fulbright scholar on the built environment around us is large, and there are many other examples of fruitful Fulbright exchanges.

How can we bring a little more knowledge into the world? As teachers and professionals, we share our expertise with our students and colleagues on a daily basis. To go a step further, I would like to invite you to share your insights with the broader public: by explaining concepts to our friends and family, by writing blog posts that refute popular but ill-founded claims, and by showing our enthusiasm for evidence-based policies. In a world with rising anti-science and conspiracy sentiments, we cannot stand on the sidelines.

A little more knowledge is the part of Senator Fulbright's words that we can quantify most directly. But how do we evaluate a little more reason and a little more compassion? These concepts go deeper and touch our very human nature. They challenge what we think is “right” and pave the way for trying to

understand “the other.” I do not need to look further than my own experiences. With my Fulbright scholarship, I, a typical bleeding-heart liberal European, went to Georgia Tech, and learned to understand the reasoning and emotions that lie behind some sentiments that my younger self could not wrap her head around.

With online media outlets catering to all sides of the political spectrum, it may be easy and convenient to get our information from sources that align with our views. I invite you to break this circle, listen to other points of view, and instead of bristling at the contents, take a deep breath, and try to meet this information with reason and compassion.

If we, as Fulbright alumni, want to honor the impact that the Fulbright program and our time in the United States left upon us, we need to dare to lead and strive for excellence. I invite you to use your knowledge wisely and where needed. Finally, I invite you to honor the words of Senator Fulbright, infuse reason and compassion in our work and our conversations, and set the example for those around us.

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Is a full professor at Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Quito, Ecuador, a part-time researcher at Delft University of Technology, Delft, the Netherlands, and a structural engineer at ADSTREN, Quito, Ecuador. She obtained a Master’s Degree in Civil Engineering from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium in 2008, a Master’s Degree in Structural Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA with scholarships from the Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF) and Fulbright in 2009, and a Ph.D. in Structural Engineering from Delft University of Technology, Delft, the Netherlands in 2013. The field of research of Dr. Lantsoght is the design and analysis of concrete structures and the analysis of existing bridges, about which she has published extensively (see hyperlinks https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=v_tYJtEAAA&hl=nl y <https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=39361776000>). She is dedicated to sharing knowledge about existing structures to professionals in Ecuador and beyond in order to improve the safety and sustainability of the built environment. Dr. Lantsoght serves on technical committees of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, and the American Concrete Institute. She is an academic editor for PLOS One, and the editor in chief of ACI Avances en Ciencias e Ingenierías. Dr. Lantsoght’s interests also include science communication, science outreach, higher education policy, and the improvement of doctoral education, as reflected by her textbook “The A-Z of the PhD Trajectory – A Practical Guide for a Successful Journey” in the Springer Texts in Education series.