



## Gilman Alumni Interview Transcript - Naledi Nyahuma

My name is Naledi Nyahuma from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I went to Spelman College, undergrad. I studied abroad in London, England in Fall 2004, and my major was Economics, minor in Management and Organization, and when I was in London, I went to the University of London, Queen Mary College. While I was there I took an accounting class and I took three economics classes; it was a pretty hard core semester for me. I learned a lot. I formed some tight bonds with my professors, which I think was unique as an international student, and I really enjoyed the experience.

I applied for a Gilman Scholarship because it was highly recommended and recognized at my school as one of the premier programs for students that want to study abroad. I knew that studying abroad was important to me as my parents studied in London for their undergraduate studies a long time ago, and they always mention to me that it's an opportunity that I should take advantage of when it comes. So I learned about the Gilman Scholarship. I knew that with the Scholarship you also have to have a project at the end, so I thought it was important that they wanted you to actually use your studies over there and kind of have something to show for it when you come back. So while I was searching for schools through that program I realized that Queen Mary College was very diverse, with a diverse student population. It had very different courses; one that interested me was the Economics of Social Problems, so I thought that was very unique. It was not an elective offered at my school and when I had the opportunity to go, I went because I also think that it's important for students to look for study abroad programs to choose one that has different options like home-stay, I thought that was important with mine, or check the curriculum, check the city you're in, because some students are surprised when they get there – they don't know if it's in a major city or a rural countryside. So I think for me, I did a lot of research before I applied to Gilman to make sure I knew what school I wanted to go to and what type of curriculum they offered.

The Gilman experience was very good for me. I found it really exciting. The one challenge I had was adjusting to the curriculum there. They had a very unique course offering, which I liked about it, but there's sort of a different system where there is one big final at the end that's the majority of your grade. So I felt a lot of anxiety and pressure about that that I didn't really experience in the States, so I wasn't ready for that. I was used to being able to build up your grade through class participation or quizzes, etc. So that was one challenge I experienced. Other than that I felt it to be very rewarding, I met a lot of students there, I have some friends now that I went there. As I said I went there in 2004 and I still keep up some people I met in my classes. I also joined the Afro-Caribbean Society there on campus, so that allowed me to meet other students that weren't living on campus; there's a big population that commutes to

school. So I thought that was good and it helped me kind of branch out and expand my network. So overall it was just a really good positive experience.

My Gilman project, at the end of my studies, was to come back to Spelman, which is in Atlanta, Georgia and go to local schools there, local high schools, talk to the students, encourage them to not only go to college but to take advantage of all the opportunities offered there, which includes studying abroad. I told them the importance travel, I presented some video, my photos, and I did this at maybe three or four schools where I thought it was important to give a different perspective on college and my college experience for them. And I found it really rewarding to just talk to the high school students, to see what their goals are, and let them know that once you get into college there are so many different opportunities, people and networks there that you can expand them each semester and that's what I did when I went to London.

My advice to students that are applying to Gilman Scholarships would just be to be as open and honest about yourself and your goals in your essays. I think in any application process, the people who are looking at your application are interested in knowing who you are as a person outside of numbers and facts. Also, I think if you can express yourself in your essay about why you would like to study, why it's important, why Gilman is important to you, and even why that host country is important, then I think you'll have a successful application.