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FAVORITE QUOTE OR MANTRA THAT YOU LIVE BY?

Here are two that I keep in mind:

1-In a public service career, you have the honor and privilege of representing your country and its highest ideals, not just one political party or another.

2. Wag more, bark less! Take your work seriously, yourself not so much.

NAME A LEADER THAT YOU ADMIRE AND THE QUALITIES THAT YOU BELIEVE MAKE THEM A SUCCESSFUL LEADER?

I admire Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the current U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, for her warm, inclusive leadership style. An African-American who graduated from Louisiana State University, she told Congress during her confirmation hearings about serving overseas and inviting foreign dignitaries into her residence for a pot of home-cooked gumbo. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield's folksy "gumbo diplomacy" approach served her well throughout her impressive Foreign Service career. Her appointment to represent the United States at the UN shows the world that not all high-ranking American diplomats are "pale, male and Yale."

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WORK IN YOUR FIELD OF EXPERTISE?

In graduate school, I gravitated to government service after receiving a fellowship at the U.S. General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office). Then I met my first husband, a Senior Foreign Service Officer, and went with him to Santo Domingo where I saw him and other U.S. diplomats representing our country overseas. My husband died during that assignment, and I decided to honor his memory by taking up the career he loved. In October 1994, three years after he died, I entered the Foreign Service. My career took me to eight overseas postings – among them a war zone (Baghdad), earthquake-devastated Port-au-Prince, NATO, Paris (where I met my current husband), London, Vancouver (where I was the U.S. Consul General) and two domestic assignments. I retired in November 2018 as a Senior Foreign Service Officer with the rank of Minister Counselor.

ONE TIP YOU WOULD GIVE WOMEN WHO ASPIRE TO BE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES?

Take all the written and oral communications training you can, whether through your agency or other avenues. Learn how to write clearly, whatever the written products – articles, briefing papers, memos, evaluations. Learn how to speak effectively and persuasively to diverse audiences, how to present ideas, give direction and feedback, deliver statements and interviews. Communications skills are critical to advancement.

YOUR ADVICE TO OTHERS ON HOW THEY MAY BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR CAREER?

I would advise anyone striving for professional success to:

Know your job and do it well. Understand what your role is, how it fits into the mission of your organization and your unit, and what constitutes success. Then ensure you are contributing to the mission and the overall success of the organization.

Treat priorities as priorities. Organize yourself so that you direct your efforts first, or most often, to those tasks that are critically important for you or your organization. The corollary is to set boundaries and screen out the less important. A massive earthquake hit Haiti in 2010 while I was heading the U.S. Embassy Port-au-Prince office that provided security assistance to the Haitian National

Your advice to others on how they may be successful in their career. continued

Police. Among the emergency support personnel who arrived in the early months after the quake was a group of temporary duty (TDY) employees from U.S. development agencies who wanted to meet with me in the evenings. The Embassy was operating on reduced staffing, so workdays were long and intense. I was already having twice weekly evening meetings with U.S. Southern Command and the United Nations, and those were structured and useful. After a couple of sessions with the development group, it became clear they were meeting for the sake of meeting, not for a meaningful purpose. I finally told the group leader that my assignment was a two-year tour, not a TDY; I was running a marathon, not a sprint and needed to focus my physical and mental energy on larger U.S. government priorities. If they wanted to meet during the workday, I would make time, but I wouldn't stay late to meet. The group leader wasn't happy about it at the time, but after he had been in Haiti for several months, he told me that he was using my "marathon rather than a sprint" line to counsel his new arrivals on setting priorities and boundaries.

Wherever you sit in an organization, lead by example. Walk the walk; set standards of performance and integrity and hold yourself accountable first.

When opportunities come along for larger roles in your organization, grab them! Last year, my niece had the chance to apply for a unit chief role but hesitated, concerned that she didn't have 100% of the qualifications. I encouraged her to go for it, but what really convinced her was when a less capable man in her section told her he was applying. She landed the role and learned a lesson: don't sell yourself short!

Remember that good leaders are also "cheerleaders" who celebrate the successes of the team and team members. I'll never forget, as a GS-13, the first time I wrote Congressional testimony for an Assistant Secretary of State. He liked it so well that he walked from his big, paneled corner office down to my cubicle to thank me. As he approached, I heard him booming out, "Where is the office of Lynne Platt, who just drafted some excellent testimony for me?" By the time he arrived at my desk, I was red with embarrassment, but my cubicle-mates were looking at me with new-found respect.

