

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs Oral History Program  
Fulbright Stories Project

**MICHAEL J. MALINOWSKI**

*Interviewed by: Fran Leskovar  
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**INTERVIEW**

*Q: Today is May 8th, 2025. This is Fran Leskovar from ADST speaking. Can you state your name for the record?*

MALINOWSKI: Sure. My name is Michael J. Malinowski.  
M-A-L-I-N-O-W-S-K-I.

*Q: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Where did you grow up?*

MALINOWSKI: I'm a vascular surgeon. I've been in practice for 13 years in Milwaukee at a major academic medical center. Before my Fulbright, I actually did global health in South America, Asia, and the Dominican Republic, and grew up in Chicago.

*Q: Can you tell me a bit about your story applying to Fulbright? How did you find out about the Fulbright Fellowship, and how did you apply?*

MALINOWSKI: I was working as adjunct faculty for Johns Hopkins School of Education and teaching international fellows when I heard about it as an opportunity from physicians around the world who had such good stories about Fulbright exchanges and the community that was developed around it.

*Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your Fulbright project? Where did you work?*

MALINOWSKI: My Fulbright project was to South America, in Montevideo, Uruguay. I worked within the UdelaR University System (University of the Republic), which is the second largest public university system in South America. I worked with the medical school and university leadership—about 40,000 plus students in 2023—working on filling gaps in their medical health curriculum and university system with exchanges with their university faculty.

*Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your day-to-day interactions with people, what were they like, and what were you guys talking about?*

MALINOWSKI: It was fantastic. It was probably one of the best academic collegiate experiences of my life, and I've done a lot of international work before my Fulbright. My whole life is taking care of people and doing medical education, doing emergency surgeries, and the group I met in South America was full of transplant nephrologists, dermatologists, vascular surgeons such as myself. It consisted of major lecture series that we would give, but also daily dialogues, and this was something very specific to Uruguay. These dialogues were really community sessions to bring people and stakeholders together regarding a single topic. It was to bring everybody to the table at the university, a really big university system, and have a talk. So, the speaker of the day was really not the one who spoke the most. It was meant to bring people in, get to know people who were just a mile away within the same university campus and exchange ideas, see where everybody was at, look in on research projects and develop opportunities locally within the system.

*Q: What would you do in your free time during your Fulbright? Did you volunteer, did you travel?*

MALINOWSKI: I volunteer a lot within the US. I have grants that deal with health disparities research within Milwaukee and the underserved, but when I was in South America, I actually spent most of my free time hanging out with my faculty. It was fantastic. One of the best experiences I ever had was when I was hanging out with the faculty I did my Fulbright with. We were sitting on a beach, singing Beatles songs at ten o'clock at night, discussing the week's work and the upcoming lectures that we had, and some of the challenges that both nations were facing as far as medical education and health care.

*Q: How did your Fulbright experience make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous?*

MALINOWSKI: Really in two ways. I think this is a little bit different than maybe a lot of Fulbrights. This dealt with public health and health care, and health care is a huge pillar of society, right? It affects GDP. A healthier nation is a better productive nation. So, they were looking at closing gaps in healthcare which makes every nation stronger. From a different standpoint, which I think had a lot of similarities with other Fulbrights, is it brought together collegiality. There's a purity of the exchange in the Fulbright. We got to bring expertise, they got to exchange expertise, and that's a strong relationship that only good things and opportunity can emerge from that level of trust, when you can build up one nation from another and vice versa.

*Q: What does Fulbright mean to you?*

MALINOWSKI: Fulbright is everyone who's striving for excellence in this world. I think it's everybody who hopes that tomorrow is a better day and is willing to

put in the hard work and sacrifice to get it done. That exchange, that's where Fulbright came from. That was its inception after World War II, to make these nations better through exchange. I think that's what every Fulbrighter has at their heart when they do it.

*Q: Any general lessons learned from the Fulbright experience you can share that might apply to everyday work?*

MALINOWSKI: I think the purity of the exchange is making sure that when you're addressing problems, you can get to that level where you have meaningful change and adaptation. It's about how you look at a problem and evaluate it. I think the Fulbright really helps you do that on a much larger scale over a longer period of time with very substantial issues. Every Fulbrighter I've ever met, the biggest thing they take away from it is that they want to go back and do another because they care so much about it.

*Q: What is your hope for Fulbright Fellow students and programs?*

MALINOWSKI: I hope they're around for my kids, because they are so substantial. They really do bring our interests around the world. They bring science back to us. They bring learning back to us. They bring programmatic development back to us. They allow us to be a part of the world as it develops around us.

*Q: Anything else you have to say?*

MALINOWSKI: No

*Q: Alright. This is the end of the interview.*

*End of interview*