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My Career Choice: Nicole DiCocco - From Diplomacy to H.O.P.E.



When foreign leaders visit the U.S., Americans read the headlines but few understand all the hard work and negotiating that goes into planning those visits. Nicole DiCocco, who has worked as a strategic consultant in international relations and global affairs, knows what goes on behind the scenes. She has spent most of her career assisting in diplomatic relations for heads of state, ambassadors, and ministerial staff for several foreign governments and agencies.

Nicole is now taking all her experience and putting it to work in the non-profit sector as the Executive Director for The H.O.P.E. Foundation for a Better Tomorrow (Helping Other People Excel). The organization was founded by her brother, Frank DiCocco, who worked as a coach and had dedicated his life to working with young people around the country. Frank died when he was only 29 years-old, but he had already touched the lives of thousands of youths through his REAL Man Character Development program, taught in after school programs, camps, middle schools, high schools, and colleges throughout the country.

The H.O.P.E. Foundation for a Better Tomorrow, now with Nicole's help, continues to reach for Frank's dream - to help underprivileged students and student athletes demonstrate exemplary ambition, a commitment to both academic and intellectual excellence, dedication to community service, and a desire to become personally and professionally successful. For more information, [go to the website for The H.O.P.E. Foundation.](#)

Can you point to one event that triggered your interest in your career?

I moved to Dubai after college to work for MC Saatchi where I was exposed to various cultural ideals and attitudes. A basic awareness of where others are coming from always leads to successful negotiations in any sector. Upon returning to the USA two years later, I parlayed that experience into the diplomatic arena.

What about this career choice did you find most appealing?

While working as the assistant to the Libyan ambassador, I was most excited to be part of a diplomatic reproachment of two countries under the Bush administration that could affect real change: during this time Muammar Qaddafi gave up his WMD program, the U.S. and Libya reached a bilateral resolution on Lockerbie and we saw the first visit of a U.S. Secretary of State to Tripoli in more than 30 years.

What steps did you take to begin your education or training?

I attended Miss Porters School for girls in Farmington, Connecticut that provided me with a wonderful academic foundation true to their mission of turning out students to “shape a changing world.”

Along the way, were people encouraging or discouraging?

Many people were encouraging. The U.S. State Department, the embassy and its diplomats and many people were discouraging - at times in particular the senate during various hearings and with the introduction of certain resolutions and of course the entire news media. I always viewed such situations as non permanent and perfectly resolvable ones though, and never let those who discouraged me stop my ability to exact change.

Did you ever doubt your decision and attempt a career change?

Never - not even when I was slammed by the *New York Daily News* and a variety of other news outlets for being the spokeswoman for the Libyan embassy in a time of great turmoil.

When did your career reach a tipping point?

During the Libyan revolution the U.S. suspended relations with Libya. At that time I transitioned into work with non profits and philanthropy, where I became the executive director of my family's foundation: The H.O.P.E. Foundation for a Better Tomorrow.

Can you describe a challenge you had to overcome?

My younger brother passed away at the age of 29 in 2013. It was a shock and completely unexpected. My family turned a traumatic experience into one of service, helping underprivileged children in the community and starting the H.O.P.E. Foundation for a Better Tomorrow to carry on my brothers legacy and love for helping those less fortunate than himself.

What single skill has proven to be most useful?

Patience and persistence. Many times things did not go according to plan and I was tempted to have an out burst in various high level meetings. The ability to control my emotions in a targeted manner has always served me better at any negotiating table or any other endeavor that I have engaged in.

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

I am proud to have organized Muammar Qaddafis inaugural visit to the United Nations in 2009. It was a major task ridden with an enormous amount of obstacles. To be able to pull off the first diplomatic visit of a head of state in more than thirty years accompanied by his foreign minister and a team of 200 was a major vote of confidence awarded to me by those who believed in my diplomatic skills.

Any advice for others entering your profession?

Try any career path that incites a fire in you. There will always be those who disagree with your choices and never be afraid to make mistakes. Next time you'll be much closer to understanding what works and what doesn't work!