

**Ambassador Feinstein's Remarks to
the American Studies Center of Warsaw University
"From One American Studies Major to Another"**

October 3, 2011

Thank you, Director Basiuk, for that introduction and for inviting me here. Director Basiuk, as a participant in the prestigious Fulbright program, is the perfect person to be leading the American Studies Center at Warsaw University. The center has played an important role in promoting U.S.-Polish relations since 1976, though I hear that the Institute of American Studies at Jagellonian University in Krakow is pretty good too.

As the Ambassador of the United States, it's nice to be among friends at the American Studies Center, though a little intimidating to speak to people who might know more about my country than I do.

Jeśli macie Państwo takich rodziców jak ja, to pewnie Wam mówią:

“Dlaczego amerykanistyka? Co będziesz potem robić?”

Ja sam skończyłem amerykanistykę,.

I przyjechałem tu po to, żeby Państwu powiedzieć:

“Będzie dobrze!”

Pozdrówcie rodziców ode mnie i powiedzcie im, że nie ma co się martwić. Będzie dobrze. To są dobre studia!

[I am sure some of your parents have been questioning your choice of majors. If your parents are like mine, they probably are asking you “what are you going to do when you graduate?”, “What kind of job will you get with this degree?”, or “What is American studies anyway?” Well, I’m here to tell you it will be alright. I am a living, breathing graduate of an American studies program. And it has turned out okay for me. So, tell your parents I told them not to worry.]

But it is not just me at the U.S. Embassy-- we have many ASC graduates of Warsaw University, including Krzysztof Debski [should be present], Monika Kolotaj-Conway, Magdalena Kotlewska, Magdalena Szlop, Katarzyna Szyndel, and Joanna Zasun [should be present].

American studies was a good choice for me because it is a multi-disciplinary course of study, which trained me to think across fields and disciplines, whether philosophy, literature, history, political science, or law.

American studies is a good choice here in Warsaw for many other reasons, too. First, is the benefit of studying a foreign culture. And America, as such a diverse and open country, will give you insight into all of the other cultures that have influenced it.

Second, America's role in the world today is unique, and this makes it particularly relevant to you as students choosing a foreign culture to study. America's economy is the largest and most technologically powerful in the world. Does anyone want to guess how big American GDP is? Actually, it was \$14.66 TRILLION dollars in 2010.

Openness plays a very important role in our economy. Small entrepreneurs with new ideas stimulate innovation and create new jobs. Today, half of the non-agricultural American economy is made up of small and medium sized businesses. And half of non-agricultural jobs are maintained by these small and medium sized firms.

Many experts believe that women are the backbone of the U.S. economy. 60% of them work, and 40% of working women are the primary breadwinners in their families. Women make up 46% of the labor force, but occupy 51% of managerial and professional jobs. And more women graduate from universities than men, so we expect these numbers to rise.

And American firms operate all over the world, providing new goods, technology, and jobs for people like you. The two biggest companies in the world are both American. Do you want to guess what they are? No, not McDonald's. Actually, they are Walmart and ExxonMobil.

America is also a world leader in science and technology. We employ 70% of the world's Nobel Prize winners in the sciences, account for 40 percent of the world's total R&D expenditures, about a third of the world's patents, and about 35% of total scientific research publications. Like Poland, we have had a lot of Nobel prize winners, most of them in the sciences. In fact, there have been three times as many Nobel Prize winners from the U.S. as from any other country.

Much of America's prosperity comes from the value we place on education, as education drives innovation. Our universities are generally recognized as being among the best in the world. Does anyone want to guess how many of the top 20 universities in the world, according to widely-accepted rankings, are American? 17! Our openness to foreign students and foreign professors helps ensure that bright minds keep U.S. universities competitive. Last year, almost 700,000 foreigners came to U.S. universities, an increase of 3%.

I want to mention two last aspects of America today, and those are the internet and our language. The internet, as most of you probably know, was invented in America. You all probably take the internet for granted, but it has not always existed. In fact, some of us dinosaurs even remember life before the internet.

The internet has truly transformed the world, from agriculture to medicine to hobbies to dating to business. How many of you are on Facebook? Well let me say thank you for contributing to Mark Zuckerberg's \$7 million dollar house in Silicon Valley. And let me invite you to friend the U.S. Embassy's Facebook site. But seriously, you all know then how Facebook and the internet are helping us become better connected, and how they are spreading American culture, good and bad.

American English has also become global English, the language of globalization. Knowing American English will help you use the internet, participate in global finance and business, attend international scientific conferences, or simply go on vacation around the world.

And that's really my underlying message: when you study America today, you learn about the modern world. And so when you become an expert in American studies, as all of you have chosen to do, you are giving yourself an advantage in our globalized world. An American studies degree doesn't guarantee you the American dream, but it should make it easier for you to find a job, vacation abroad, welcome foreigners to Poland, understand the jokes in Hollywood movies, and have more friends on Facebook than your classmates who chose engineering!

Those are my not-so-objective reasons why American studies is a good choice anywhere in the world. But I'd like to add my third reason-- that such a specialty is especially valuable in Poland, where there is a strong history of ties between our countries. In other words, you are in fact helping your own country of Poland when you learn the culture of an important ally like the United States.

Moreover, I would not be doing my job as U.S. Ambassador to Poland if I did not mention the strength of U.S.-Polish relations. America looks to Poland as one of our closest allies and oldest friends. Our bilateral relations have been forged over more than two centuries of supporting each other in wars hot and cold.

And now, a few months after President Obama's visit to Warsaw, we can be proud of our achievements in broadening and deepening our relationship for the new century. It is a relationship that appreciates and encourages Poland's emergence as a strong and influential member of NATO and the European Union. It is a relationship built on a shared strategic view and shared values.

I sometimes like to say the laws of physics bring Poland and the United States closer together. Poland is the eastern edge of the European Union and America the western border of the transatlantic space and, because we tend to see the world through a similar lens, we have a unique opportunity, and I might even say responsibility, to forge transatlantic solidarity together.

America's relationship with Poland is built on three pillars of cooperation: promoting democracy, expanding prosperity, and strengthening mutual security. Allow me to briefly review them.

Today, both the United States and Poland want to help people beyond our own borders. We recognize that there is still work to do in our countries, but we also accept the responsibility to share with others the freedoms and rights we both enjoy. This year, Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Sikorski established a democracy dialogue to promote democracy from Belarus to Benghazi, the only such dialogue America has with another country.

We each have our own strengths and experiences to draw from. America, as you know, is the oldest true democracy in existence today. And Poland, though you certainly are too young to remember it, has made one of the most remarkable transitions from communism to democracy in the world. It is an achievement of which you all should be proud, as it was both peaceful and supported on a mass level, and it is an example for the rest of the world. And Poland can draw from a longer history of democracy, being the second country after the United States to produce a written constitution.

The second pillar of our cooperation is promoting prosperity in both of our countries. Trade and investment between Poland and the United States is high – but not nearly enough. In 2010, the value of collective U.S. investments in Poland was \$30 billion and total trade in goods was about \$6 billion dollars. U.S. firms now provide direct and indirect employment to more than 350,000 workers in Poland. I believe these amounts are set to grow much further.

Transatlantic trade is also very important to both our countries. America and Europe are one another's major trading partners by far, at an amount of over \$1 billion a day. We are also one another's major foreign employer by far, creating about six million jobs on each side of the Atlantic. Investment is over \$1.8 trillion a year, and U.S.-EU trade accounts for almost 40% of world trade.

The U.S-Polish economic partnership is growing especially deep in energy. You have probably heard about shale gas deposits in Poland that American firms are helping to explore. We are also working together to develop clean energy sources like wind and biomass. And we have signed two agreements on nuclear energy. This energy cooperation is good for our economies, it's good for our security, and it's good for the environment.

Providing for mutual defense and security cooperation is the third pillar of our bilateral relationship. We work closely within NATO to improve military infrastructure in Poland and do contingency planning for collective defense. Last December, Presidents Obama and Komorowski agreed on the deployment of an American air detachment in Poland. Our countries also signed an agreement to station ballistic missile defenses in Poland as part of a NATO system. And American and Polish soldiers are serving side-by-side in Afghanistan to help stabilize that country and reduce the terrorist threat to the world.

So that is why I believe American studies are relevant to the world in general, and to Poland in particular. But what exactly is America? Every American will give you a different answer, his or her own opinion. And that is America: diversity, freedom, creativity. But I think there are some general values and traits of Americans that you should know about as fellow American studies majors.

The first of these values is openness. By this I mean being open to people and ideas that are different from your own. Americans certainly don't always agree with each other—that's the nature of democracy. But we strive to treat each other with respect and judge each other on the basis of our individual actions.

This has been true since the beginning of American history, ensuring that we remain open to accepting new Americans. The French writer Alexis de Tocqueville noticed in the 19th century that the American embrace of diversity and individual rights actually made the country more stable. And one of our Founding Fathers, James Madison, argued in the Federalist Papers that only a large and diverse country would keep our country from being ruined by small factions. In the long run, I think they were both right, as America has certainly benefitted from immigration and prospered.

President Obama explained this summer what he called: “a simple idea, as old as America itself: E pluribus unum. Out of many, one. We define ourselves as a nation of immigrants... It doesn’t matter where you come from; it doesn’t matter what you look like; it doesn’t matter what faith you worship. What matters is that you believe in the ideals on which we were founded; that you believe that all of us are created equal, endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. All of us deserve our freedoms and our pursuit of happiness.”

I am especially proud that America has remained open and true to its values after the attacks of September 11. America did not give in to fear, but remained open to foreigners and embraced the diversity of our nation. We elected Barack Hussein Obama, the son of a Muslim from Africa to be our president.

President Obama has made support for core universal values, those shared by America and Poland, a priority in his administration. His National Security Strategy says plainly: “Our strategy starts by recognizing that our strength and influence abroad begins with the steps we take at home... We must educate our children to compete in an age where knowledge is capital, and the marketplace is global... We will advocate for and advance the basic rights upon which our Nation was founded... We promote these values by living them, including our commitment to the rule of law.”

Now I know that no country is perfect. President Obama famously said during his campaign that we must all-- certainly in America-- strive for a “more perfect union.” But I would encourage all of you to continue Poland’s long history of tolerance for diversity. Historically, of course, Poland was famous for its openness to Jews, Muslims, Orthodox, Protestants and others. But in some countries today, including in Europe, there can be a tendency to emphasize the ethnic or religious identity of the majority group. Sometimes nationalists say that X country is only for the X people. I fully understand the importance of traditions and ethnic cultures, especially in countries much older than America.

But in today's globalized world, it is neither realistic nor desirable to have ethnic segregation according to national borders. The demographic reality of most developed countries today is that they need immigrants. Moreover, immigrants bring new energy and ideas with them. That's the true secret of America's success that I told you about earlier. Smart countries actually TRY to attract talented immigrants, not keep them out. Would you believe that Intel, Google, Ebay and Yahoo were all created by immigrants? One quarter of American Nobel prize winners have been immigrants and one third of scientists and engineers in Silicon Valley are immigrants. Today, many of our spelling bees are won by immigrants or their children.

Polish immigrants have also played a large role in America's success. Does anyone know how many Americans today claim Polish ancestry? Yes, about 10 million. And some states, like Michigan and Wisconsin are about 10% Polish! You might know that Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Kazimierz Pulaski helped America win our independence from Great Britain. But did you know that we showed our gratitude by making Pulaski an honorary U.S. citizen—one of only seven in history, including Winston Churchill—and establishing October 11 as General Pulaski Memorial Day in America?

Did you know there are memorials, parks, and highways all around the U.S. named after Pulaski and Kosciuszko? – pretty impressive, considering that most Americans can't pronounce Kosciuszko. But Kosciuszko was an amazing man. In his last will before leaving America, Kosciuszko left his property to Thomas Jefferson to be used to buy the freedom of black slaves, including Jefferson's and to pay for their education. It's an inspiring story of dedication to values, even in difficult times.

Do you know how many U.S. Senators, out of 100 total, are of Polish descent? At least four, including Barbara Mikulski of Maryland and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska [also Kirsten Gillibrand nee Rutnik of NY and Bernie Sanders of VT].

Did you know that many Polish Americans have won Nobel prizes, such as Frank Wilczek for physics in 2004? Or that many sports stars, like baseball great Stan Musial or Olympic basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski, have Polish roots?

Or that many famous Hollywood actors could be your relatives? Like Natalie Portman, Scarlett Johansson, John Krasinski [“The Office”], Leelee Elzbieta Sobieski [“Joan of Arc”], Gwyneth Paltrow or Shia LaBeouf [“Transformers”]. So America has certainly benefitted from keeping itself open to such immigrants. What would America be today if Natalie Portman had not played Queen Amidala in the Star Wars movie? Or the world, if Steve Wozniak had not co-founded Apple Computer?

Another type of openness that is much discussed in America right now is internet freedom. Do you know there are countries where Facebook, Twitter and the internet generally are censored today? That's why Secretary of State Clinton, my boss, has made internet freedom a priority in American foreign policy. She explains: "On their own, new technologies do not take sides in the struggle for freedom and progress, but the United States does. We stand for a single internet where all of humanity has equal access to knowledge and ideas."

Beyond openness, I think there are several other values important to all Americans. We generally believe in personal control over our fate and responsibility for our individual actions. We see change as natural and positive, and often think long-term about the future. We highly value time and using it efficiently. To save time, Americans try to be both practical and direct in conversations and in their actions.

Another extremely important value in America is that of equal opportunity. Our belief in equality is part of why we fought for our independence from Great Britain. In announcing our Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote that “all men are created equal,” a phrase many consider to be the most important of our founding documents. Some Polish-Americans even think that Jefferson may have developed this idea from the writings of Polish philosopher Wawrzyniec Goslicki. Regardless, we believe very strongly that everyone should have the same fair chances in life.

What Americans make of these chances we believe depends on merit, and individual action. To us, fair competition is very important. We learn to compete against each other, according to set rules, from a young age in sports, school, and eventually in business. And while these fair and transparent rules are important for our society, our society and culture are very informal.

The decision of American Studies as a major in university was an important one for me. I wanted my studies to be practical and useful for the future, in a typically American way. This was a few years back, after the dinosaurs had left, but while the Cold War was still going on. I had studied the Russian language and studied in the Soviet Union.

I settled on American studies as a way to incorporate several subjects I was interested in: American politics, history and culture. We had a wide-ranging curriculum that included poetry and literature, but not things like media studies that I would consider important today. The decision was also important for my parents, who wanted what was best for their son.

My story-- and every American has a story to tell-- is part of America's story. My parents were the children of immigrants who came to the U.S. without education from central and eastern European countries like Poland. My family left what was then Poland in 1911, exactly 100 years ago. They succeeded in integrating into American society, adopting the values I mentioned. In particular, they supported my education, receiving the bachelor's degree in American studies and then a law degree. And now here I am, back in Poland as the Ambassador of the United States.

Since Americans are not afraid of advertising, let me tell you what resources our Embassy has to offer. We have programs both in Poland and in America where you can learn to be real experts on America like Director Basiuk. You can start by viewing our webpage, *warsaw.usembassy.gov*, though you can also “like” us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and check out our YouTube channel. These sources will tell you more about the many cultural and educational events our Embassy organizes.

You can also study in America. We also have an Educational Advising Center at the Fulbright Commission and at the Embassy to give you advice on studying at U.S. universities. And you can take part in the popular Summer Work and Travel program to make money and see America during your summers in university.

You can also apply for internships in our Embassy. Where is Krzysiek? Krzysiek did very valuable work for us in the Political Section this summer. Our Embassy also helped create a Polish-American Internship Initiative with the Polish American Freedom Foundation to place students of science and engineering at American companies for the summer.

After university, Polish students and professors are eligible to participate in the prestigious Fulbright program, which is doubling in size thanks to support from the Polish government. We also support the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship, the Teachers Excellence Achievement Program, and exchanges for professionals. Even President Komorowski went on one of these in 2006.

Don't forget that you can always go as a tourist to America with your friends and family, as 150,000 Poles do every year. You may have heard that it's never been easier or faster to receive a non-immigrant visa to the U.S. Over 90% of Polish citizens are now issued visas, generally multi-entry visas for ten years. I understand that the question of visas in Poland is a sensitive one, but we are working with Congress to right this wrong. No one wants Poland to enter the Visa Waiver program more than I do.

And if anyone is interested in moving to the United States to live permanently, I have good news as well. Starting tomorrow, Polish citizens are welcome to submit free entries to the 2013 Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, also known as the green card lottery. The initial entry period runs until November 5, with winners notified after May 1, 2012.

Before I let you get to your studies, I want to congratulate you again on your choice of American studies and wish you the best of luck in this academic year. It's certainly an important time to study America in Poland.

Let me close with a quote from Bronislaw Geremek, a Polish hero much admired in the United States. He said about relations between America and Europe: “Poland, shall be a dedicated advocate both of the process of European integration and a strong transatlantic link. The United States has given the Atlantic community leadership, stability and strength. Europe continuously needs a firm American anchor for its security and growth. Conversely, American security and prosperity depend on a reliable and flourishing Europe.”

In other words, our two countries need each other. And we need experts like you to help this process. That’s the truth-- from one American studies major to another.