

# Meet our Diplomats: Darion Akins (Consul General, USA)

## Quotations

“To me Texas means something else. Texas means independence and self-reliance.”  
(Darion Akins, 00:02:00)

“Even the person that we look at and kind of say, ‘you know, we don’t really agree with you – you kind of seem a little bit ...,’ we don’t stop that person from presuming that life unless they interfere or harm someone else. So that person that goes off and thinks a little bit differently may also end up, ya know inventing something and starting a new company or so. Because that person has ideas that other people just didn’t have.”  
(Darion Akins, 00:04:30)

“I truly feel that language is for communication, so I ... my goal is you understand me, I understand you. I am not so concerned about how I sound or if I used the perfect word or if I can speak that person’s language fluently. Although I feel self-conscious about that and would love to be able to speak every language as fluently as a native speaker.”  
(Darion Akins, 00:15:20)

“There is two things that I learned from this experience. One is, you can misunderstand people. I tend to think people are basically good at heart and so when something negative happens it is not necessarily intended. I think in most cases it is completely unintentional. And so, you have to go on tis journey to discover what it is. Why? What is going on there? And when you take the time to do that, people will actually appreciate because you then will be able to “ I think I know what your point of view is.”” (Darion Akins, 00:27:20)

“It really is, that you have to put the work in to understand the other persons point of view.” (Darion Akins, 00:35:00)

“My experience in Northern Germany is that initially you have a wall. Initially it is the opposite. Sort of “No, who are you, what do you want?” I had this experience with neighbours, with people in the streets, with colleagues etc. and then once you are in, once you are friends, you are truly friends. And I think that friendship, this is just my personal opinion, around the world is the same.” (Dr. J, 00:38:00)

“More than anything that kind of illustrates my experience of language and culture. How we can be talking about the same thing and perceive it and conceive it in very different ways.” (Darion Akins, 01:12:50)

## Vocabulary

Source: Merriam Webster online dictionary [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

## General Vocabulary

**Consul general (noun):** a consul of the first rank stationed in an important place or having jurisdiction in several places or over several consuls

**Contradicting (verb):** implying, causing, or being a contradiction

**Elaborate (verb):** planned or carried out with great care; marked by complexity, fullness of detail, or ornateness

**self-reliance (noun):** reliance on one's own efforts and abilities

**foundation (noun):** a basis (such as a tenet, principle, or axiom) upon which something stands or is supported

**interfere (verb):** to interpose in a way that hinders or impedes : come into collision or be in opposition

**mindset (noun):** mental attitude or inclination

**prejudice (noun):** preconceived judgment or opinion; an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge

**superficial (adjective):** concerned only with the obvious or apparent; seen on the surface; presenting only an appearance without substance or significance

**residence (noun):** the place where one actually lives as distinguished from one's domicile or a place of temporary sojourn

**bridge (verb):** to make a bridge over or across

**disparity (noun):** a noticeable and usually significant difference or dissimilarity

**implication (noun):** close connection

**implement (verb):** to give practical effect to and ensure of actual fulfilment by concrete measures

## Special Vocabulary

**Nyanja (noun):** a Bantu language of the Nyanja people

**Chaperone (noun):** a person (such as a matron) who for propriety (see [PROPRIETY sense 2](#)) accompanies one or more young unmarried women in public or in mixed company

**peace corps (noun):** a body of trained personnel sent as volunteers especially to assist underdeveloped nations

**ambassador (noun):** an official envoy, especially: a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his or

her own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment

**recess (noun):** a suspension of business or procedure often for rest or relaxation

**diplomat (noun):** one employed or skilled in diplomacy

### Discussion Questions

- 1) In your opinion, what is the main purpose of language beyond just basic communication?
- 2) How can language and culture bridge gaps?
- 3) Do you think it is important to leave your comfort zone and experience other cultures? If so, what important experiences did you make yourself?
- 4) What is your experience with getting to know and befriending people from other countries and cultures? How does your inner and outer self differ?