

# Passing the Torch: From Generation to Generation

Victor Hugo Canda



Who out of the current - or past - ISS students can say that both their parents previously studied at ISS? My guess is not many. The year was 1992 and my

parents felt the time was right to pursue their studies: two and a half years had passed since the Revolution had ended in Nicaragua (after about five years of civil war, the general elections were held in 1990 and the Sandinistas lost the election and gave up power). The change in regime in Nicaragua was the catalyst that persuaded my parents to leave the country and study: they had both participated in the revolutionary process of the 1980s and served in various capacities in the Sandinista government. The political polarization when the new government took office in 1990 was so deep that it was virtually impossible for anyone who had any connection to the revolutionary process of the 1980s to keep or get a decent job, whether it be in the state or in the private sector and my parents immediately lost their jobs. The second reason, and deeply linked to the first, is that both of them realized that because of their high levels of insecurity it was of strategic importance to pursue higher education. A degree would increase their chances of finding decent jobs in the future and make them better prepared to face a unipolar world (the USSR had just disintegrated) which would inevitably become more globalized and competitive. They finally took the bold step of leaving Nicaragua with a small child (at this point I was

just 3 or 4 years old) to study at ISS – my mother for the 15-month MA programme and my father a few months later for the 12-month Postgraduate Programme.

Whilst my parents were attending lectures I started my education at the Karavaan School after which I would be taken to a nearby crèche to be collected by one of my parents. When my father was still in The Hague, he would pick me up and then cook dinner for when my mother came back to the dorm. My father left the Netherlands in August 1993 and my mother took over the role of taking me to school and collecting me from crèche. When the time and climate allowed it, we would go to Delft on Saturdays and to Scheveningen on Sundays and I still have fond memories of my time here.

... Following  
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After graduating from ISS, my father started applying for jobs in other Central American countries and by late-1993 had found a job with a Danish NGO in El Salvador. Once she had completed her MA, my mother and I joined him there in December 1993 and it is here that we remained until 1999. Once she had completed her MA, my mother was able to put the knowledge she had learnt at ISS to the test in El Salvador as she worked freelance in the consultancy sector. My parents both enjoyed their time at ISS and were happy to see that the knowledge they had acquired could be put into practice in a developing country such as El Salvador (which had also gone through a civil war similar to that in Nicaragua). Eventually, back in Nicaragua, things would get better for them as they found jobs in the cooperation sector, working in many Nordic embassies. Indeed, their studies at ISS opened many doors for them and these doors helped them to develop both academically and professionally.

Years later, after I had received my bachelor's degree in Political Science I started thinking about doing a Masters Programme abroad. My parents had always encouraged me to consider ISS as I too wanted to pursue my studies in the area of development studies. In 2012 I started looking seriously into the possibilities of following in my parents' footsteps and in early 2013 was happy to receive the notification letter informing me that Nuffic had granted me a scholarship to study at ISS. My parents were extremely happy to hear the news and in the days ahead would talk to me about their memories

at ISS and the Netherlands. It was a great moment for our family: their only son was now about to attend the same Institute that they had attended twenty years previously. Thus, personally I feel tremendous joy in being able to follow my parents' footsteps. Both of them are persons that I deeply admire, not only because of their academic and professional achievements but also because of their personal goals. To get a bit closer to what they have done and accomplished in their lives would be an honour to me and studying at ISS is a major step forward in achieving that.

I must admit that I did not fully know what to expect when I came to ISS on Saturday August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013. Even though the website gives you an idea of how things are going to be, it is not until you actually arrive here that you get a better sense of things. So far I must say that I am enjoying my time at ISS and I am glad to see that ISS, as it did in my parents' time, is still willing to look beyond the mainstream. The many

readings we as students have, provide us with meaningful insights that help us develop our analytical skills in ways that perhaps few other readings had done before. The Masters Programme is still multidisciplinary in its approach and analyzes all relevant theories of development. In this sense ISS remains quite different from other institutes that largely limit their attention to mainstream theories and debates. Furthermore, it is really special to be able to interact with people that come from all corners of the globe. More than 150 new students with different languages, cultures, religions, traditions, and customs are present in one single institute. All of us are here with one purpose: to obtain sufficient knowledge and skills that can contribute to the development of our countries . . . and I truly believe that ISS will help us in achieving that goal!

Victor Hugo Canda is currently studying for an MA in Development Studies at ISS, majoring in Governance, Policy and Political Economy.



*Victor in The Hague as a child. Thanks to Victor Hugo Canda Gutierrez for the use of this photo*

