

**CHECK OUT  
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## Fulbright Staff Welcomes New Grantees

This summer was a busy month of travel for AMIDEAST Fulbright Program Officers Stephanie D'Souza and Jody Griffin. Before the students traveled to the United States to begin their academic program, both Stephanie and Jody had the wonderful opportunity to meet some of our newest Fulbright grantees!

In mid-June, Stephanie traveled to Egypt where she met with the Fulbright Binational Commission in Cairo and the AMIDEAST-Cairo field office. She later had the chance to speak with our Fulbright grantees in preparation for their arrival in the United States. She fielded questions from students ranging from practical immigration-related issues to cultural and academic expectations in the American university classroom.

At the same time, Jody also traveled to the region in June. During her trip, Jody met with students from a number of countries, including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and UAE. In Bahrain, Jody held a pre-departure orientation to welcome more than 27 students, including 9 Fulbright grantees, as well as grantees for the Hubert H. Humphrey and the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) programs. She also conducted a number of interviews with the news media and radio dis-



(Above) Jody, not pictured, speaks with the Bahraini Fulbright grantees during the pre-departure orientation in Bahrain, which was featured in *Al-Watan*, a local Bahraini newspaper, on June 8, 2006. (Middle) Jody, seated at right, in an interview for the *Al-Awasat*, another local Bahraini newspaper.



cussing various opportunities provided by the Fulbright Program.

Later, Jody flew to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia where she hosted another orientation for our first-ever Saudi Fulbright grantees, followed by meetings with the Ministry of Higher Education.

Then, in Muscat, Oman, she led an orientation with non-funded grantees, in addition to prospective candidates.

In preparation for the upcoming Fulbright Program in the UAE, Jody also met with Ambassador Michele Sison in Abu Dhabi to discuss the logistics needed to launch a successful program.



(Above) Stephanie, middle in the back row, and some of our recent Fulbright grantees. There are 18 new grantees from Egypt for the 2006-2007 academic year.

**SNEAK PEAK!**

**How much do you know about the Fulbright Program?**

Test your knowledge in this short 6-question trivia game. (see page 5)

# Happenings at Headquarters

AMIDEAST/HQ added a couple new faces to the Fulbright Department. However, we also had to say good-bye to some of our former staff as they explore other opportunities. Good luck!

**Elisa O'Keefe** joined AMIDEAST in April 2006 as the Program Officer for grantees from Morocco and Lebanon. She also manages the Fulbright Alumni Program and the Israeli-Arab Scholarship Program. Elisa comes to AMIDEAST from Sister Cities International where she served as Director of Youth and Education Programs. Prior to Sister Cities, she was an academic advisor at American University's English Language Institute and served as a Program Coordinator for the Teacher Quality Initiative at the Public Education Network. Elisa also lived in Hungary for two years where she taught English and American History to high school students. She earned her M.A. in International Training and Education from American University.

**Megan Worley** started working as a Program Assistant for Fulbright Program this past July. Megan graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley and has since worked in medical research in Boston and as a Marketing Assistant at the Chronicle of Higher Education in Washington, D.C. before joining the

AMIDEAST team. She is assisting with the placement of students from Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, and Yemen and greatly looks forward to working with all of you.

After working at AMIDEAST for nearly four years, Program Officer **Julie Williams** will be pursuing an internship in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. In her departure, Julie bids her dearest farewell, "I have thoroughly enjoyed working with all of you and seeing so many of you progress in your studies and in your lives...You all have been inspirations to me, and I am constantly impressed with your knowledge, fortitude, and wonderful personalities...I wish you all great success in your academic studies and I hope all of your dreams come true."

Former Program Assistant **Aseel Elborn** no longer works with the Fulbright Program. She is now a Senior Program Assistant for the Cyprus-America Scholarship Program (CASP) here at AMIDEAST, which includes students from Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. Congratulations on your new position, Aseel!

## Current Student Updates

### Gaza

#### **Linda Wafi, MA/Sustainable Development, School for International Training (SIT):**

On June 27, 2006, Linda was a featured speaker at the Salaam-Shalom-Peace 2006 panel discussion sponsored by SIT Center for Intercultural Programs. Salaam-Shalom-Peace was founded five years ago in response for the need to promote more effective dialogue and increased knowledge of all cultures. Linda discussed the topic of "Anti-Semitism & Islamophobia," in the hopes of bringing intercultural understanding of the Middle East in the United States.

#### **Sami Almafouh, MS/Electrical and Computer Engineering, Florida Institute of Technology:**

Sami attended the Fulbright Science and Technology Seminar,\* which was an immensely valuable experience for him. Sami adds "it

was the springboard for me to think outside the engineering books." Also, please be sure to look out for two articles written by Sami about wireless communications and biomedical engineering, which will be published the Institute of Electrical and Electronics, Inc (IEEE), this fall. Currently, Sami is pursuing his PhD at Georgia Tech University, while working as a Research Assistant in the Wireless Systems Lab in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department.

### Yemen

#### **Hussein Al-Ashwal, MA, Teaching English as a Second Language, St. Michael's College:**

We wish to extend our dearest congratulations to Hussein for receiving the prestigious Richard C. Yorkey TESL Graduate Scholarship, which is granted to students who achieve exceptional academic success

throughout their studies. Recipients receive financial assistance for the year in which they were awarded.



(Above) Sami Almafouh, near the Golden Gate Bridge, in San Francisco, California.

\*Note: The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) hosted an enrichment seminar for foreign Fulbright students in science and technology fields entitled *From Lab to Market* from May 30-June 3, 2006 in San Jose, California. Approximately 50 students from the Near East and North Africa took part in the seminar. During the seminar, the students had the opportunity to meet with successful entrepreneurs and learn about various business practices.

# Updates (continued from page 2)

## **Ibrahim Abbas, MS/Pharmacy Administration, University of Houston:**

In March, Ibrahim was nominated by the one of the university's fraternities, Delta Kappa Gamma, for outstanding on-campus leadership and was subsequently awarded a prize for his efforts. Later, in May, he presented two investigational studies, or "abstracts," in Philadelphia, PA at the International Society of Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) conference. He also began working on a two-month long summer project during his internship at St. Luke's Hospital in collaboration with McKesson Company.



(Above) Ashraf Almimi, in front of the Tech Museum of Innovation, at the 2006 Fulbright Science and Technology Seminar.

## **West Bank**

### **Ashraf Almimi, PhD/Quality and Reliability Engineering, Arizona State University:**

Ashraf had the esteemed honor of having his articles published in two prominent journals. One article, "Follow-Up Designs to Resolve Confounding in Split-Plot Experiments," in the *Journal of Quality Technology*, and the other, "Estimation of Missing Observations in Two-Level Split-Plot Designs," appeared in *Quality and Reliability Engineering International*.

In addition, Ashraf also attended the Fulbright Science and Technology Seminar in San Jose, California. One of the seminars, "From Lab to Market," focused on several presentations involving the importance of innovation and creativity and the fundamentals in starting a business. Ashraf had the opportunity to meet influential experts and leaders in the field, including representative from AMD and Sun Microsystems.

## **Tami Rafidi, PhD/Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Nova Southeastern University:**

Over the summer, Tami traveled back home to the West Bank to intern at the Palestinian Peace Coalition/Geneva Initiative (PPC/GI), which was established to promote peace and democracy in the region. According to Tami, the central goal of PPC/GI is to build "a broad peace coalition based on a vision of a realistic political solution through the enhancement and promotion of public debate and participation of various sectors of the public." Upon her return home to the West Bank, Tami wants to cultivate an environment of peace by providing tools to the younger generation "raised on violence and bloodshed" and establish effective conflict resolution organizations to ameliorate the situation.

## **Bahrain**

### **Jameela Mukhaimer, PhD/Nursing, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor:**

Jameela had a summer internship at the Shura Council in Bahrain from July to August 2006.

## **Khalid Albayat, MS/Computer Science, Rochester Institute of Technology:**

Along with other Fulbright grantees, Khalid attended the first annual Fulbright Science and Technology Seminar. He also achieved a remarkable 4.0 GPA in his spring quarter before completing his MBA in Technology Management.



(Above) Khalid Albayat, on trendy Santana Row in San Jose, California, during the Fulbright Science and Technology Seminar.

*"I cannot sit idle out there reading. [I have] to contribute and add value to my community."*

*Slim Menzli,*

*Tunisia*

### Updates (continued from page 3)

#### Oman

**Mustafa Al Lawati, MBA/Finance, Cleveland State University:** Before he arrived in the United States, Mustafa was pleased to have an article published about his Fulbright award in the *Times of Oman* on July 12, 2006. In the article, Mustafa “expressed his thanks and gratitude to the Fulbright organization and the American Embassy in Muscat for selecting him for the scholarship and the Management of the National Bank of Oman for permitting him to join this programme.”

**Manal Al-Zadjali, MS/Community Health Nursing, Arizona State University:** One of Arizona State University’s nursing centers, Breaking the Cycle Community Health Care (BTC), celebrated Manal’s accomplishments by featuring her in an article published by the renowned National Nursing Centers Consortium, a health facility that provides ser-

vices to low-income, at-risk populations across the United States. Her studies focus on health intervention geared specifically toward reducing the occurrence of diabetes and heart disease in Omani women. Upon completion of her grant, Manal will be the first master’s level community health nurse in Oman.

#### Jordan

**Abdallah Kayed Farraj, PhD/Electrical Engineering, Texas A&M University:** Abdallah was awarded the Graduate Teaching Academy Fellowship from Texas A&M. The GTA Fellowship is a one-year voluntary program aimed at developing career potential for graduate students in the area of university teaching. In order to be considered eligible for the fellowship, he had to attend many seminars, observe different classroom settings, develop his own teaching portfolio, participate in community-service related activities, including the mentor program at his university.

“Once we can  
communicate and  
exchange ideas we can  
then have true  
understanding and  
peace.”

Mohamed Al-Wadeai,  
Yemen

## Fulbrighters Coming Together!

On August 30, 2006 the University of South Florida held the President’s and Provost’s special reception to honor the new scholarship students. Pictured below are Fulbright grantees, including: **Slaheddine M’Nasri** from Tunisia, fourth from the right, who is pursuing his M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology, and **Hala Faraj** from Bahrain, sixth from the right, who will be working towards her MBA in Business Administration.



# QUIZ

## How much do you really know about the Fulbright Program? Take this quiz and find out!

(Answers appear below)



- 1. What is the procedure if a student wants to travel outside the United States?**
  - A. Send DS-2019 by regular mail.
  - B. Send AMIDEAST your DS-2019 via certified mail, as well as your flight itinerary.
  - C. Leave without notifying AMIDEAST.
- 2. Does a Fulbright grantee have to file U.S. taxes?**
  - A. Yes
  - B. No
  - C. AMIDEAST files taxes on behalf of the grantees.
- 3. How is a work authorization different from Academic Training?**
  - A. They are both the same.
  - B. Work authorizations mean that students can accept employment at any organization, even if it is not related to his/her field of study.
  - C. Work authorization take place on-campus, whereas Academic Training is held off-campus. However, both must be directly related to a student's field of study.
- 4. What happens if a student's visa expires while he/she is in the United States?**
  - A. A student must apply for another visa.
  - B. A student is legally permitted to be in the United States on an expired visa, as long as his/her DS-2019 is still valid.
  - C. The student will be deported.
- 5. Who administers a student's ASPE health coverage?**
  - A. U.S. State Department
  - B. AMIDEAST
  - C. None of the above
- 6. What happens to a student's immigration status, if he/she has completed his/her academic program, but the end date on the DS-2019 has expired?**
  - A. Students must leave the country immediately.
  - B. Students have a thirty-day grace period following the program end date on the DS-2019.
  - C. Request that AMIDEAST extend the dates on the DS-2019.

### Answers:

- (B). If you plan to travel outside of the United States during the holidays, you must send your DS-2019 to our office via certified, traceable mail (i.e. UPS or FedEx) so that the Travel Authorization section may be signed allowing you to return to the U.S. legally. Please also be sure to send us a copy of your travel itinerary with flight numbers, dates, times, etc. Remember: if you travel for more than 29 consecutive days (including your dates of travel), you will not receive maintenance for the month or months during which you are outside of the U.S.*
- (A). Yes. AMIDEAST will mail students tax information and instructions at the beginning of the winter semester. Since AMIDEAST cannot directly advise students on how to file their taxes, we encourage students to go to the Office of International Students on campus for guidance. However, please remember that if you receive a tax refund, that money is required to be sent to AMIDEAST, as it is the sponsoring agency that distributes the grant.*
- (C). Students may not accept employment at any time without prior approval through AMIDEAST. During a student's academic program, he/she is only allowed to earn up to \$500 a month of employment earnings.*
- (B). As long as you possess a valid DS-2019 and are participating in your academic program, you are legally permitted to be in the United States, even if the J-1 visa stamp in your passport has expired. However, it is important that current students do not travel outside the United States on an expired visa because they will not be able to return unless their visa is renewed. Additionally, we recommend that a student's passport is valid for at least six months beyond the program end dates listed in the DS-2019 form.*
- (C). AMIDEAST does not directly deal with ASPE. Instead medical claims are processed through ACS Healthcare Solutions. We recommend that students contact ACS if they have any questions regarding their medical expenses or coverage. The toll-free number is 1-800-299-8742.*
- (B). A student has a thirty (30) day grace period following the Fulbright Program Termination date stated in the Departure Letter to return to your home country. The student will not receive any Fulbright funding during this period.*

## Student News!

***“It’s really a great chance to bring our Arab culture together with the American culture.”***  
**Mohamed Al-Hamdani, Yemen**

## Fulbright Scholar: My Experience in America

By: Mohamed Al-Hamdani

*Mohamed Al-Hamdani is a Yemeni Fulbright grantee pursuing his MA in English with a focus in American Literature at Radford University. Below are excerpts of Mohamed’s article that was featured in the Yemen Times on June 26, 2006 and is reprinted with permission from the author.*



**Mohamed Al-Hamdani in New York City**

I’ve been an ordinary Yemeni all of my life. I’ve excelled in school since first grade. I really never dreamed of leaving Yemen. To the contrary, I always thought Yemen’s young sons should live in, build, and take care of it. These views were the result of the influential roles my father and eldest brother had on me.

I remember the day one of my friends called and told me the Fulbright Scholarship – which I always talked to him about – was available and that we should apply for it. We did apply and after the long, tough screening process, I was lucky enough to win. I was extremely psyched to know that through my hard work and determination, I’d finally reached one of my goals and it’s worth every single fraction of a second I spent preparing for it.

When it was time to leave, it was a sweet yet sad feeling. I was excited, but also sad to leave my family, friends and the whole lifestyle to which I was accustomed.

Being in the U.S. was one of my biggest dreams. I was blessed to have my second oldest brother, who’s lived in New York City for about 17 years, meet me. He and his family helped me greatly while I found my feet. The first couple of days at college were quite nice and I was excited and happy to be there.

Then, things totally changed, as it was the first wave of shock about which I was told in predeparture orientation at AMIDEAST. There was this sense of loneliness and helplessness. I wanted to do many things, but I just didn’t know how to proceed. I wanted to go shopping, but I neither had a car nor knew where the nearest shop was located. Simultaneously, my homesickness grew bigger.

It’s been hard trying to ameliorate the image of Arabs and Muslims in the U.S., especially given the current political reality, but I’m doing the best I can to represent my Yemeni-Islamic culture. Most people have preconceived ideas that are hard to change and stereotypes flourish in certain areas and regions in the U.S.

I’ve also been doing a lot of cultural work, trying to make a good impression and reflect the rich culture from which I come. For example, I gave a presentation about Yemen at the International Rotary Club in Radford. I also was featured in the RU College of Graduate and Extended Education newsletter. Additionally, I’ve been participating in local biblical studies, where I have the opportunity to speak about Islam and misconceived Islamic teachings.

I also have written three short stories about my experiences, highlighting Yemeni culture and lifestyle. These stories were for workshops in two of my creative writing classes. I feel so honored and privileged to be able to represent my culture and present the brighter side of Islamic and Arab identity and reality. It’s really a great chance to bring our Arab culture together with the American culture.

I want to let everybody who is dreaming about traveling know that the sweet dreams they have now won’t come true easily.

*Story continues on page 7*

(continued from page 6)

I know many who think that the minute they make it to another country, they'll be able to fulfill all their dreams and live with flying colors. This is absolutely bogus, as it requires a lot of hard work and solid determination. Nothing comes so easily that one just sits there waiting for it to happen.

The Fulbright Scholarship has been an awesome opportunity for me and it's really made me a better person. I feel so privileged to be a Fulbright[er] and I'm determined to use everything I learn to improve my country. I want to be able to make changes, even if it's only in a person's life.

Lastly, I hope this brief account of my story has been useful and helpful. I want every reader to know that this experience is a life-time opportunity, contributing greatly to me in all aspects of my life. It's helped me discover things about myself that I never knew existed.

I strongly urge everyone to go out and try to live this experience. However, bear in mind that you need to come back and use everything you learn to build your own home—Yemen\*—which has sheltered and brought us up.

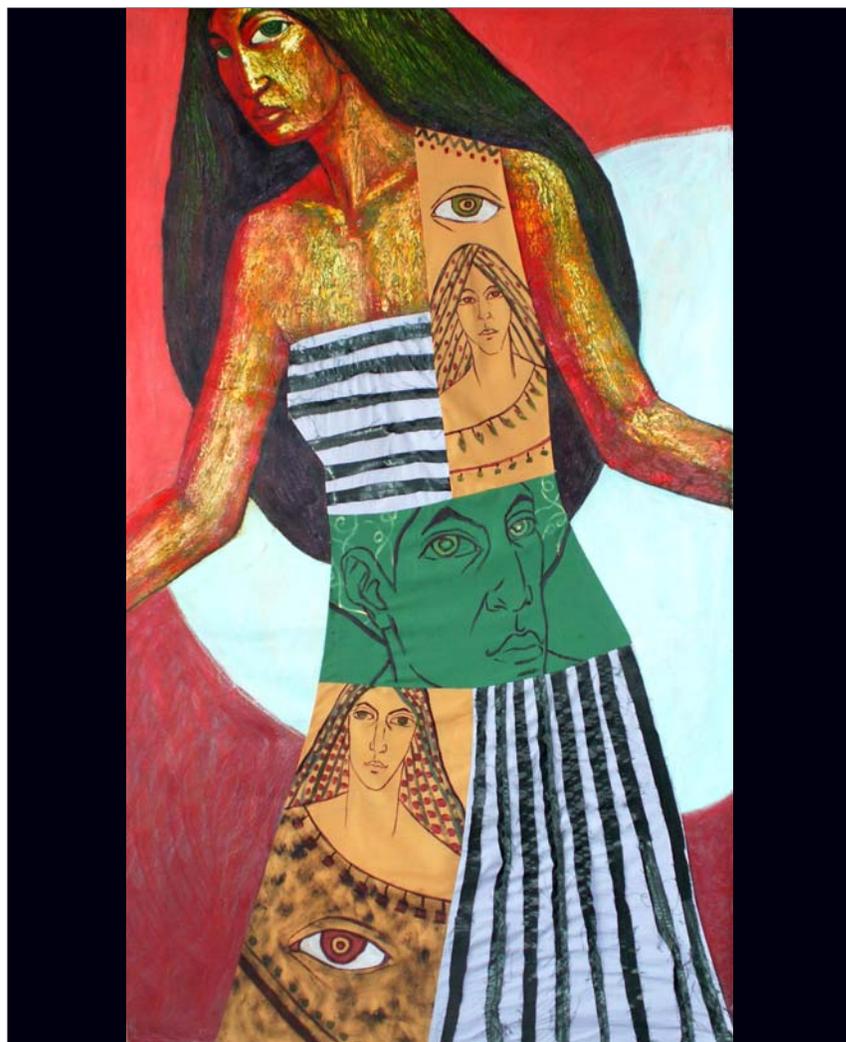
I've always felt so enthused to be part of the Fulbright program and to help bridge gaps between our culture and American culture. In the end, I feel blessed to share my story with such respected readers.

\*The author is a citizen of Yemen.

## Fashion Forward

**Bassem Yousri Helmi**, an Egyptian Fulbright grantee, had a very busy summer. Not only did he complete his classes at Drexel University as a non-degree student, but he also ended his internship at a popular fashion house, Diane von Furstenberg, with a solo exhibition of his art at the Pearlstein Art Gallery in Philadelphia. Bassem's work features an innovative idea, in which he mixes fashion design with painting. In this piece, Bassem says that he "sew[s] the clothes of my figures in real fabric and attach[es] them to the canvas by collage. This was one of the objectives of my scholarship, mixing my work as a painter with that as a fashion designer, and I am really glad I'll be able to share it with others." Bassem now embarks on continuing his academic training with another fashion designer, Joan Shepp, in Philadelphia this fall.

(Right) Image of Bassem's work: *Untitled*, oil and collage on canvas, 35x60 inches



# Mr. Shebl Goes to San Francisco!



**Hazem Shebl**, one of the recent Fulbright grantees from Egypt, spent eight weeks over the summer at the University of California, Santa Cruz for a Pre-Academic Program, which is an intensive English program that provides students the opportunity to improve their English skills and concentrate on their chosen field of study.

During his stay, Hazem had the chance to visit San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Santa Cruz. On the way to his academic university, he also made a special trip to New York City!

This fall, Hazem begins his studies as a non-degree student at Rutgers University in Stage Lighting Design.

## And in the *Deserts* Of Arizona...

**Slim Menzli**, a Tunisian Fulbright grantee, also attended a Pre-Academic Program at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where one of his essays was published in the Center of English as a Second Language (CESL) weekly newsletter. Upon conclusion of the program, Slim says, "I feel so nostalgic to do it again that I consider Tucson to be my second home now! I'm even ready to hug the first cactus I come across so much I love those plants in Arizona!"

*Slim wrote an article sharing his thoughts about the program, and the level of support he received during his stay. His story continues below:*

**Setting:** The Hall of Colonia De La Paz, one of the on-campus residences at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

The 2006 Fulbright team, hosted for three weeks by the Center of English as a Second Language (CESL), was eclectic, playful, funny and cohesive. The chemistry kicked in real fast. And all of sudden all the hurdles that languages, races, religions, gender and ages could bring about vanished to give place to openness, tolerance and constructive exchange. We have been the melting pot inside the melting pot.

The agenda was consistent including a wide spectrum of activities: oral and writing skills, group projects and seminars, community service, and visits to museums, and even playing soccer, going on hikes, and watching movies. We have been through it all!

My own assessment is that the Pre-Academic Program was not only a good prelude for our graduate studies but also the perfect cocoon within which we better learned the very heart of what the Fulbright Program is all about: respect and mutual understanding.

And for me it was not just the Hall of La Paz in Tucson. It was as if it was the atrium of the UN building in New York City where some few good people gathered for the good of many other people.



# Ramadan Kareem with Fatma Assef

During her grant, former Fulbright grantee from Egypt, **Fatma Assef**, pursued her studies as a non-degree PhD student in American Cultural Studies at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Currently, Fatma is studying at Middlebury College in Vermont to further her research. Below is an article she wrote detailing her experiences of practicing Ramadan in the United States.

It's almost 6:00 p.m., and it's quite damp outside. Fall is breathtaking and scenic in Vermont, but the pernicious cold is creeping its way in pretty ostensibly. She said she would drop by and we could go to either Ross, Atwater Commons, or other restaurants in the area to have *iftar* together. I can't stay here any more. I am too starved. I need soup. I am craving *khoshaaf* and am dying for some *amareddeen*. They say if you say a prayer on your stark empty stomach, just before you break your fast, you're more likely to be heeded. I only want to pray for my father, God bless his soul, but I sometimes forget, because I am usually too hungry to remember. However, sometimes I do remember, I only wish He hears me!

When I focus on my inner sensations, I realize that I am neither hungry, nor thirsty even. I mean, after all, I have been trained to fast ever since I was 10 or 11, but then my mom and dad never made me fast for the whole day at this age. At first, they would ask me to try to fast until noon only and then every year they would add a couple of hours to it. I cheated twice.

I knock on the Portuguese House door, but Lillian is not home. She was asking me that other day why it is that we fast. The point was, as I remember I told her, that it wasn't just the food, drink, and sex that Muslims are, ideally speaking, abstaining from sunrise to sunset. A model Muslim should endeavor not to swear, lie, or harbor bad intentions towards others during that month. It's all about self-discipline really; if you smoke you learn to cut down on the addiction during that month, that is, if not quit it altogether.

If you are a coffee addict like me, you learn to "detox" a couple of weeks earlier by consuming decaffeinated coffee only, a habit that I developed only here in the United States, or else get hooked on tea instead, a less alluring drink. In an idyllic setup, of course, those observing Ramadan are urged to both experience and recollect the feelings of hunger, thirst, and deprivation, which other less-privileged people experience. The morale being, naturally, learning the value of charity and the importance of giving *alms* to the poor. I holler for Lillian again. My voice echoes back at me. Well, so much for Lillian; so much for company.

When I arrive at Atwater, the student dining facility, I anxiously stand in line and quickly scan the food in front of me. Let's see now, pasta, I'll pass, got some twenty pounds to kill down here, mashed potatoes, maybe, and pork

chops...PORK CHOPS??! Dang it! Again! I did it again!

I forgot to check the Dining Hall menu online! I am too tired to venture somewhere else, so I skip the line and go for desert. If you're fasting, the extra calories shouldn't count, and it would be unethical if they did really. Carrot cake. I smile. Coffee! I am ecstatic; almost elated! The smell is rejuvenating. I feel like a phoenix rising from its ashes.

As I put the food on my tray, the famous, yet obsolete, Egyptian singer Abdel Motalleb echoes in my head. Its funny how your musical taste changes abroad—you go from one extreme to another. When I came to the United States in August 2000, a Syrian singer called George Wassouf started to grow on me, and like a fungus, too. I would have never thought back home in Alexandria that I would even buy his albums! Then, you suddenly mature, or rather age, when you live abroad for long periods of time. "*Ramadan gaaana! We ferhnaa bou, ba'ed gheeyabou, we ba'aalou zamaan.*" Then it suddenly hit me, did I miss it as the song has it? Did it bring me happiness? Has it come with its pockets filled with *atayyef* and *mekasaaraat*? And *fawazeer*? And *fawanees*? And *mesaharaaty*? I miss that man who wandered about our streets with his archaic drum worn out by drumming the sleepers out of their satiated and stuffed slumbers to, funnily enough, stuff themselves with more food. I always found humor in that...but of course, dawn prayers shouldn't be overlooked. What happened to the lanterns in the streets and the cheap, yet joyful, decorations in the streets? Where did *Mawa'id Arrahman* go? Oh, give up.

I spot an empty table at the far end of the dining hall. I guard it with my eyes and hope to God no one gets there before I do. I induce visual memories of the empty streets surrounding the Faculty of Engineering in Alexandria around *Madfaa* time. The city is deserted because the families are eating together. Everyone! It's obligatory. It's sacred! And probably the only time throughout the year for many families to get together. The emptiness is deceptive. But mine isn't. It's real. Today it is. I mix my gravy with my mashed potatoes; my mind wanders off to *saneyet batates* in the oven. I never liked it! Why is it constantly revisiting me now?

I asked a local restaurant to cater my event at the Arabic House. I ordered stuffed grape leaves and meat pies. Another place provided *falafel*, the Levantine recipe, with crushed chick peas, not the Egyptian *fava* beans recipe. I cooked fowl with onions, tomatoes and cumin that night as classic Amr Diab songs played in the background. Who would have thought that I will hear the same tunes here? I tried to evoke the spirit of Ramadan here, but it cannot simply be summoned by old Amr Diab tunes and a dish of *fava* beans, even the Egyptian style. I say my short prayer and place the fork in my mouth, a split second of euphoria, *allahoma Inni Laka Somt...*



# Traveling over Winter Break

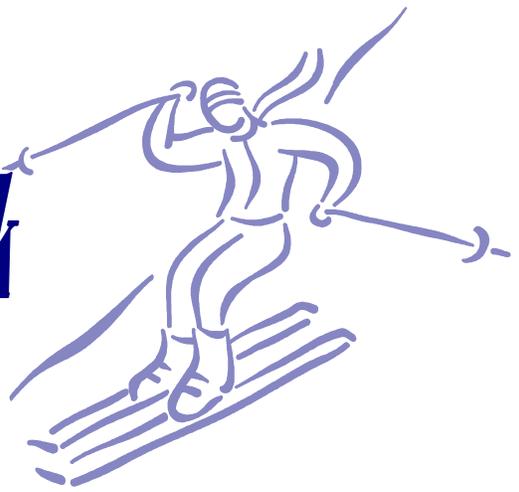
Winter break from your university can be a relaxing and enjoyable time if you make your plans well in advance! We encourage you to stay in the U.S. during your time off and experience the fun of an American holiday season.

Although many international students choose to remain on-campus during the holidays, some may become lonely when American students leave to be with their families. For this reason, you may consider applying to be hosted by an American family through the Christmas International House. This program gives international students the chance to become acquainted with another region of the U.S., as well as develop a friendship with a family that wants to share their Christmas traditions. Please visit <http://www.christmasih.org> for more information and an application. We also invite students to check out other religious-affiliated organizations on-campus for holiday-hosting opportunities.

You may also choose to travel on your own or with friends throughout the U.S. This is a good opportunity to visit a city or state that you would

not have time to visit over a regular weekend. Please make sure to inform us of where you will be going, and how we can contact you while you are there in case of an emergency!

Finally, you may choose to return to your home country and visit with your family and friends. Please double-check that your visa will still be valid at the time of re-entry to the U.S., and also send AMIDEAST your DS-2019 by certified or traceable mail about two weeks before you leave. We will sign it to authorize you for travel and ship it back to you in time for your departure. This signature is valid for one year. Please make sure it is multi-entry. You will also need to send us your travel itinerary and a contact phone number in your home country. Remember that if you will be out of the U.S. for more than 29 consecutive days, you will not receive maintenance for the month you are away.



## EMERGENCY SAFETY TIPS

Do you know what to do if a natural disaster or other emergency strikes your area?

✓ Follow all instructions given by your university and local authorities. Obey any evacuation orders, and contact your AMIDEAST advisor if you need help arranging your evacuation.

✓ If you evacuate, remember to bring your passport, DS-2019, cell phone, cell phone chargers, and any other valuable items such as a laptop.



✓ Call your AMIDEAST advisor to let them know your situation and/or temporary address. AMIDEAST has a toll-free number: 1-800-368-5720. Continue to call or email each day to update them with your status.

✓ Finally, don't forget to call your family back home to let them know you are okay! We can also contact your family members on your behalf!

# AMIDEAST Fulbright Staff

**Program Director**  
Kate DeBoer

**Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia,  
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