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# Fulbrighter

The Fulbright Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

## CULTURE SHOCK IN THE U.S.

By: Katia Hameg, Algeria

In trying to adapt to the American culture, I would say that I, as an international student, do not feel so different or foreign to this country. Let me explain the way I have understood culture shock. It is when we do not adapt to the new environment's values or share its common beliefs that we begin to feel uncomfortable everywhere and every time. It's like seeing something odd out of the corner of my eye. From my own experience, I shift my perception to take it in more completely, and spend a little more time processing it, but what originally caught my attention does not seem as strange as it did at first glance. What wears me down is the sheer number of times I have to stop and process the new and somewhat different information, and attempt to relate it to what I already know. The signs are in English, although the English is often not quite the same usage as what I would anticipate. The street signs are strange but generally understandable after a few moments of observation of the traffic and the area. The food often has funny or incomprehensible names but usually tastes good, although not quite like anything I've ever had at home, either. The coins look odd and sound funny when clinking together in my pocket (and the denominations are slightly different as well) but they work as coins ought to when I need to use them. The accents of the people I pass on the street often render their speech incomprehensible, but if I end up chatting with those same people, eventually something clicks in my brain and the words fall together (albeit usually not until after an embarrassing pause whilst my brain furiously processes the shift in pronunciation and the slightly different grammar and usage). On top of this is my knowledge that most of these people have no problem understanding *me, so far*. I articulate clearly what I want to communicate and repeat it as long as I am polite about it. I have met so many nice people and when I am willing to express my confusion, they are always willing to help me clear it up. Of course there is no discussion of the differences between the two cultures, Algerian and American. Both of them feature huge differences in time management, individualism as opposed to collectivism and privacy as opposed to sharing. Life is never smooth sailing. It requires a continual series of adaptations to new environments. But for the new Fulbright students who come to America, my best advice is to face unfamiliar culture settings squarely and try to cope with them. Don't panic or be afraid. It is a normal path to normalization.



Hatem Mansaera (West Bank) at the Philadelphia Phillies baseball game.



Muna Ebrish (Libya) at the Minnesota State Fair "Good Times in the USA"

## STUDENT UPDATES

**Faez Abdullah Amed** (Iraq), a James Madison Iraqi Fellow, has completed the Summer Institute on the Constitution “devoted to the study of the principles, framing, ratification, and implementation of the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights” at Georgetown University.

**Hayat Messekher** (Algeria) presented a paper entitled “Processes of EFL teacher identity formation: The case of Algerian English teachers” at the First Annual Teacher-Scholar Symposium, English Department, Indiana University of Pennsylvania on September 25, 2009.

**Hamad Mohammed** (Bahrain) participated in the screening committee at Duquesne University for the Fulbright U.S. Student program, interviewing, ranking and advising applicants. He also won the Philosophy Graduate Student Essay Award for 2008-09; presented a paper in the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center at Duquesne University; and will present the same paper at the Concerned Philosophers for Peace conference at Dayton University, Ohio, in November.

**Eman Zahran** (Egypt) scored the California Golden Star in her second 10-week pre-Academic English Course in the Extension Center of University of California Davis spring quarter. This award went to students who demonstrated distinguished efforts.

**Mohamed Helal** (Egypt) has been chosen to be the “Shapiro Scholar” at the Harvard Law School for this academic year. It is a program designed to bring together an Arab student and an Israeli student to get to know each other.

**Lamis Sleiman** (Lebanon) received the Phi Beta Delta Honors Award, the Maxwell School Award for Being a Team Leader, and Maxwell’s Award for “Shakira Bellydancing” last spring at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. She also received the Magna Cum Laude International Award. This fall she received the Phi Kappa Phi SU award and the Golden Key International Honor Society Award. She interned at the U.N. Executive Directorate in charge of Arab countries. Currently, she is interning at Search for Common Ground, which helps resolve disputes between USA and Iran, and USA and Syria.

**Zaynab El Bernoussi** (Morocco) is now an editor at the Journal of International Affairs, a very prestigious publication at Columbia University. She also edited the winning paper of the Cordier Contest, a very competitive essay contest in that same journal. She also started archery and has gotten involved in the Consulting Club at her university; she has volunteered to lead some case study classes to help people prepare for the case method in consulting interviews.

**Samy Metwally** (Egypt) was invited as a Fulbright scholar to a meeting with the professors, dean and president of Hartford Seminary. He was one of three invited visiting scholars. In this meeting, he answered many questions relating to his experience in his field of Islamic studies and to jurisprudence of Muslim minorities.

**Mohannad Al-Kajasi** (Jordan) has finished his first year with a GPA of 3.83 and was chosen as a Graduate Fellow at Florida State University’s Center for Middle East Studies. Also, he has been invited to become a member of the following two honor societies: Golden Key International Honor Society and Honor Society for International Students and Scholars (Phi Beta Delta International Honor Society).

**Ahmad Safi** (West Bank) presented two papers and one poster at the Association of Environmental Studies and Sciences in Madison, WI: *Water Technology Transfer: Concerns, Limitations and Opportunities*; *Environmental Research and Native Americans: History Culture and Science*; and *Mapping Environmental Aid 1980-2008*. Additionally, he has co-authored a paper published in the *Human Geography* journal.



Lamis Sleiman (Lebanon) won the Maxwell Award for “Shakira Bellydancing.”

CONGRATULATIONS TO WINTER 2009 GRADUATES!

- Abeer Al-Qatati**, Gaza, PhD in Endocrinology (in progress), Colorado State University
- Ahmad Safi**, Gaza, PhD in Environmental Sciences (in progress), University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Amer Doko**, Syria, MS in Information Systems Management, Carnegie Mellon University
- Ghassan Matar**, Gaza, MA in Management Information Systems, Central Michigan University
- Lamis Sleiman**, Lebanon, MA in International Affairs, Syracuse University
- Safia Trebelsi**, Tunisia, MA in International and Global Studies, Brandeis University
- Sandra Richani**, Lebanon, MA in Architectural Drafting, Princeton University

**LECTURE ON MUSLIMS IN THE U.S.**

By: Samy Metwally, Egypt

In late October, I gave a lecture for students in the chapel of Hartford Seminary on the duties of Muslims living the US. interesting things in my lecture were: Muslims' integration into the American society and their active and sincere participation for the well being and prosperity of the country they are living in. I explained that there are three categories of Muslims in the US. Those who isolate themselves for fear of their religion or their indigenous culture. The second category are those who lose their Muslim identity and start dating, drinking and doing stuff that is against the teachings of their religion. The third category are those American Muslims who integrate smoothly into the society and do their best for the peace and harmony of the country they are living in. This third best group are those who live and participate in the happy and bad days of their country as all other full citizens... i stressed that religion is not only rituals that are maintained in places of worship. Rather, it is good morals and good conduct. it is to take care of the poor and the needy and to help your neighbor and love for others and deal with them in the way you love others to do with you. I also explained that people are one family. Blacks and whites, people of different races and nationalities. All people are born from one and the same parents. I talked about respecting the law of the land which is important because generally speaking these laws are meant to maintain justice in the country. The good thing about the US is that there is a law and people support the law; there is a system and people respect and support the system. Also, i talked about supporting justice and truth whether they are coming from a Muslim or non-Muslim.

**BEING A FULBRIGHT STUDENT**

By: Muna Ebrish, Libya

Being a Fulbrighter is like being a super star every one looks at with a respect; most of the people in the US know exactly what Fulbright means, as a prestigious scholarship.

I was in Norman Oklahoma with a group of Fulbright scholars from all around the world, I was so happy and proud of being part of this,. The six weeks we spent together were so wonderful and full of joy and happiness as the photo reveals (right). We are still friends and in contact with each other mainly through Facebook, we feel like one family since we belong to the same thing (Fulbright). When we were in Oklahoma we exchanged our cultures by sharing: photos, food, and customs. Now I know a lot about many countries all around the world.

Here in Minneapolis, Minnesota I am experiencing the American culture, since most of my friends are American which is great. I spent a weekend at one of my friend family's house. She (my friend) works at Common Ground Organization. This organization is trying to find the common things between Islam and Christianity, so through my friend I am contributing in this by answering all her questions about Islam.



Muna Ebrish at University of Oklahoma Art Museum

## FOOD SAFETY: TODAY'S CHALLENGE

By: Julien Khalil, Lebanon

One of the most challenging issues facing food industries is to provide safe and high quality food to consumers. Recently, food safety became a contemporary topic: mass media, universities, health organizations. "Sterilization, pasteurization, expiration date, refrigeration, keep frozen, store in a cool place" and many more are food safety terms that all of us have heard and keep hearing every day.

Being a graduate student in Food Science and Technology, food safety is a large part of all my courses and presentations. Many speakers who gave presentations at my school talked a lot about the importance of food safety and the new technologies that ensure the delivery of safe food to consumers. One of the most interesting presentations concerning this topic was given by the food quality team of ConAgra, a food company based in Omaha, Nebraska. This presentation emphasized the huge efforts taken to ensure the production of safe food products. I even had the opportunity to visit some food companies in Colorado where I experienced the diverse and multiple techniques applied to produce a food product that respects the food safety regulations. A "farm to fork" approach has to be applied to ensure safe food production. In fact, clean and disease free raw materials, good manufacturing procedures and a suitable package are the basis for food safety. Nowadays, all U.S. food companies are under the pressure of governmental and non-governmental organizations such as the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and many more. Mass media is playing a huge role in informing the public and at the same time in judging the food industries. One of the most recent examples is the food safety incident that occurred in China in 2008 due to the addition of melamine to milk and infant formula. As a consequence, millions of contaminated products were withdrawn in most countries. Therefore, food safety is a concern for both companies and the consumers. Consumers play a role in food safety. In fact, handling and proper storage of a food product are essential in order to ensure its safety. That is why consumers are required to respect the safety instructions found on the labeling of each product. Despite all the measures taken to prevent food borne illness, according to the World Health Organization, food borne diseases are leading to the death of 2.2 million people annually in underdeveloped countries. That is why new measures and more strict regulations need to be developed. Here comes the role of food scientists to find new ways of reducing food borne diseases.

In conclusion, food safety is a continuously evolving field where new research is taking place and new technologies developed. Being a future food scientist, I hope to get involved in all the progress taking place in the world to find new and more reliable methods of delivering safe products to consumers.



This photo was taken at Rowell Ranch Rodeo during the Gateway orientation program in (San Francisco. The two other girls are also Fulbright students. The students in this picture are from right to left: Maria Jreissati from Lebanon, Julien Khalil (me) from Lebanon, Ruth Pollak from Austria.)

## MY FIRST STEPS IN THE UNITED STATES

By: Majdi Faleh, Tunisia

In June, a happy event happened in my life...I was awarded a Fulbright grant by the U.S. Department of State for the 2009 through 2011 academic terms, and I was the only student from my school, the School of Architecture and Urbanism of Tunis. It has been nearly two months now since I have undertaken my Fulbright exchange program in the United States. Currently, I am pursuing a professional masters degree at Ball State University's College of Architecture and Planning in Indiana. The first weeks, when I started my new life at my new university, were full of questioning and comparisons. Comparison was made on the basis of my educational background and about the new educational methods that I discovered here. They were both confusing and inspiring. As an interesting aspect we always speak about different architectural themes at class through collaborative group discussions, we work continuously on presentations, and, most importantly, we take field trips to enhance our background about latest innovations, techniques and advancement in the world of construction and design.

Visiting Minneapolis, the largest city in Minnesota, was a great occasion for me, as an architect, to compare the urban scale of American metropolitan areas with the European cities I have visited and my home city Tunis, as well. Minneapolis has a great cultural life through its theaters and cinemas that draw creative people to the city. We had the opportunity to visit the Guthrie Theater, designed by French Architect Jean Nouvel, the Walker Art Center by Swiss Architects Herzog and DeMeuron, and the city's Central Library by Argentinean Architect Cesar Pelli. Visiting such innovative and contemporary architectural landmarks was of great importance as an additional enrichment for my architectural background.

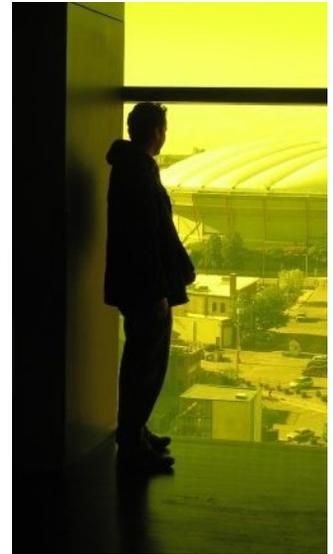
During our field trip to Minneapolis, we had a presentation about innovative health care architecture at the Ellerbe Becket office, regarded as one of the world's leading healthcare designers. Such a meeting with experienced architects and urban planners was so rewarding for our knowledge. The architects stated that today's health care design has a great impact on clinical outcomes and patient, family and caregiver satisfaction. The main issue we discussed was about including new ideas into the facility design in order to develop effectiveness and to allow for future flexibility.

To further study the idea of flexibility, we visited the Gonda Building located at the heart of the Mayo Clinic's Rochester campus. Such a building is considered a center piece of the Mayo Clinic's integrated practice and one of the most innovative health care facilities in terms of patient care and flexible design.



On October 2, we gave our final design presentation at the University of Chicago-Medical Center in front of a jury composed of many American architects. They were actually impressed with our hospital design concept and encouraged us to go further in developing our concept. The main idea was about connecting the city with the hospital through a dynamic formal design, bringing greenery inside the building and creating a colorful "new" design which includes the whole community. Healing with colors and nature was a main goal of our design.

These are my first steps at my new American university, and right now I continue to succeed in my graduate studies and to assist American and international students to learn about my diverse Arab Muslim, North African and Mediterranean culture.



## MY FIRST SEMESTER IN THE U.S.

By: Ouidiyane Eldouardaoui, Morocco

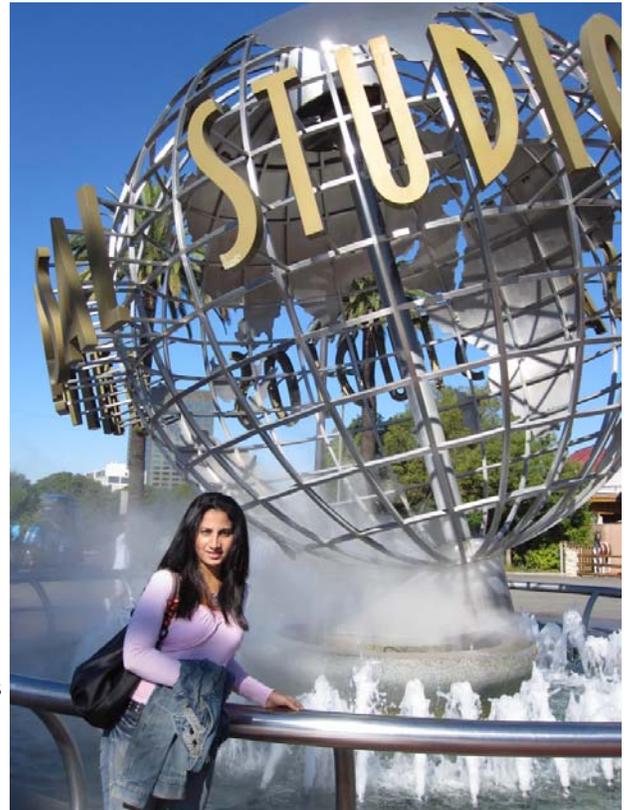
During my first day in Santa Barbara, California, I was fasting because it was still Ramadan. However, the Associate Director of International Students at the University of California – Santa Barbara (UCSB) told me that there would be a party for international students the following day. I went to look at the food that seemed very delicious despite being quite different, but I could not touch any because it was still daylight. I talked with the president of the international student association and told him that I was fasting, and I felt so delighted when he told me that I could break my fasting with other Muslims that were also waiting for the sunset. I thought that I would be meeting some fellow Arabs, however I was surprised to find out that the Muslims that were waiting for the sunset were from Turkey and Afghanistan. My surprise increased as one of the Turkish students started to speak in classical Arabic telling me that he had studied Arabic for eight years in his country. He had such a wonderful Arabic accent that it incited me to use my classical Arabic in order to hold our conversation for as long as possible. Thus, I was so glad and grateful because I was able to share my religious practice with other Muslims and at the same time got to know non-Muslim students during the very first event I attended in UCSB.

The next week, advised by an Egyptian teacher, I attended a musical performance in the UCSB music department, and again I was surprised to find out that the choir that was singing classical Arabic songs consisted solely of Americans, and I had a strange feeling looking at them striving to get the right pronunciation of the Arabic sounds. I could have never imagined Americans singing Abdel Halim or Om Kltoum's songs and enjoying them so much!! When the rehearsals were over, I started to speak with the choir members and I was astonished to discover that many of them do not only know a lot about my country but they have also visited several Moroccan cities. Actually, two of them started to speak some Moroccan Arabic, apologizing for forgetting a lot of the words and expressions they have learned due to lack of practice, and they earnestly expressed their great admiration of the beautiful Moroccan cities and the kindness and the hospitality of Moroccans. I am not sure if it was a coincidence that many Americans I met know a lot about my country defying the already-established idea of Americans not knowing much about what is going on in the world.

In addition, the most exciting experience that I have gone through is visiting Universal Studios, which was only last week. I took the tram tour in which I had the opportunity to see various set locations that were used in films and TV series. But what made my journey so thrilling and enjoyable is spending it with four sweet women from Brunei, Norway, Italy, and Denmark. Since no one could speak the other one's language, we were all so happy to use English in order to avoid any kind of confusion or exclusion.

Furthermore, I have joined the university's Muslim Student Association (MSA) in which I had the chance to meet a number of amazing Muslim fellows from different parts of the world. In fact, the MSA center has become my second house where I go to study or just discuss a range of issues with my friends, which relieves to a great extent my homesickness since there are some differences that really annoyed me at the beginning such as having no specific timing for meals and thus people here actually can eat anywhere anytime and there is almost no collective eating.

So, joining the MSA has given me the opportunity to share many of my cultural and religious practices with several wonderful friends. Finally, I am discovering new things as time goes by, and I am wondering what the coming days will bring in terms of exciting experiences and surprises.



## REFLECTIONS ON MY FIRST SEMESTER AS A FULBRIGHTER

By: Hatem Manasrah, West Bank

I would like to reflect on my Fulbright experience and on my progress in the U.S. since I arrived 4 months ago. The first step was the pre-academic program; it was a wonderful and rich experience at Drexel University. With this pre-academic program we have some sort of inaugural experience in both academic and life skills. We established our first online Fulbright network, which we called the "Dragon Network," with 30 Fulbright students from all over the world. I still keep in touch with most of them. The three weeks we spent at Drexel flew by with the intensive program and extracurricular activities. I'm lucky that my host university (Villanova University) is nearby, in a suburban section of Philadelphia, allowing me to do some exploration in advance.

Here at Villanova University, I started my journey alongside qualified faculties who facilitated my settlement and have good experience with international students. I'm also proud that Villanova was the host institution for my previous teachers back home, and the deans and staff are familiar with what is going on in my area in regard to professional and political issues. I started my regular courses, and I now take 3 courses in which I'm confident. I am actively learning beside American and international students. Beside my academic load, I am a volunteer assistant with undergraduates in a simulation lab, in order to influence such students and enrich the teaching-learning process in the nursing education domain, which is a great one the U.S. In regard to leadership activities, I joined the Omani student association at Villanova (OSA), which has many activities on and off campus. I'm in charge of the educational committee, so I plan and direct many activities with about 25 undergraduate students and alumni, including recreation and voluntary activities, such as checking the blood pressure of some people in the neighborhood and doing awareness sessions in addition to some cultural activities.

As I traveled through the northeast, I've already spent my fall 2009 break with my friends in Hampton, Virginia and Raleigh, North Carolina. Also, I spent two days in the crazy city of New York, because I'm a member of One-ToWorld, an international cultural exchange program, formerly known as Metro International, in New York, where I attended the Fulbrighters first gathered on October 15th. In addition, I attended the Student Conference on United States Affairs on November 4th at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Moreover, my next academic conference will be held in Tampa at the University of South Florida on November 11th.

Finally, I do not want to forget to say something about my neighborhood schools. I have contacted representatives who serve on the board of trustees of some schools, and I do volunteer work with the School District of Philadelphia's Department of Multilingual Education, such as the Independence Charter School. Since they introduced Arabic language as a new language in such schools, I plan to help the district develop their Arabic language program to enrich the learning experiences of their students.

## DEEDS ARE TO BE JUDGED BY THEIR INTENTIONS

By: Mohamed Helal, Egypt

This is an Arabic proverb that reflects an ancient adage that intentions are just as powerful as deeds, and that notwithstanding the fact that not all good intentions lead to fruition they are still worth recognition.

The Nobel Peace Prize should not be considered an award to President Obama or for his limited achievements since taking office. Rather, it should be seen as an endorsement of a worldview. A vision of the world that realizes the dream of Martin Luther King Jr. not to judge a human being by the color of his skin, a vision where humanity does not live under the phantom of nuclear weapons, a view of a world where religions and cultures are reconciled and where diversity is celebrated, a global community that recognizes the dangers of environmental degradation and is ready to unite to confront it, and a policy that understands that the challenges of today are global and require global responses.

As an Egyptian, Arab, African, Muslim and Mediterranean citizen of the world, I do not see this as a tribute to the American President, but to humanism, multiculturalism, multilateralism, international cooperation and to humility.



### GRATITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE U.S.

By: Amal Abu Awad, West Bank

My Fulbright scholarship has opened new horizons for my professional development. I had a previous experience of studying in the US for my master's degree; hence this recent experience at UW-Madison has increased my understanding to the different perspectives in life and scholarly academic endeavor.

The exceptional professors at UW-Madison have not only increased my knowledge, but provided me with real training in self reflection. I learned about the different epistemological perspectives and their applications, which can help me, develop my abilities as a leader capable of helping other nursing educators and students and keep them motivated.

I am a member of the Sigma theta Tau The Alpha XI University of South Carolina (Columbia, SC). And as a result of my academic achievements at the UW-Madison School of Nursing, I also became a member of the Beta-Eta Chapter-at-Large: UW Madison and Edgewood Schools of Nursing. Sigma-Theta Tau's is an honor society with a mission to promote leadership, scholarship, and quality in nursing practice and education to enhance the health of all people and improve nursing care worldwide.



Welcome gathering at Amal Abu Awad's advisor's house

### MY PRE-ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

By: Muzafar Babakr, Iraq



When I first heard that I would be participating in a pre-academic program sponsored by Center for English as a Second Language (CESL) at the University of Oklahoma, I had little hope of getting it due to my concern about assumed late Visa procedures. But I was lucky enough to get my Visa on time and thus be able to attend the program. It was a 6-week program that aimed at cultural exchange and language skills improvement. I had the opportunity to meet new people from different countries and from different cultures and we enjoyed exchanging our cultures with each other.

One day, I presented a documentary about the citadel located in my city, Arbil, which is the oldest mankind inhabiting area. The film attracted the attention of the teacher and the classmates in that it exposed them to the rich culture that my city enjoys accumulated through thousands of years. I also shared with my classmates many of our social and cultural norms and habits.

During that period, we made two special trips; I enjoyed the trip to the art museum and the interesting thing about it was that I could see the impressionist artist, Dale Chihuly, who put lots of his artistic works in the museum. At the end of the trip, I did some shopping in the shop located inside the museum and there I found some eye-catching cultural items.

Academically speaking wise, I had the opportunity to learn lots of things about US academic settings and how to make my experience a success. I learned APA style of writing, plagiarism and how to avoid it and how to keep a positive teacher-student relationship to name but a few. All these armed me with enough information about US academic settings. In short, the program was really nice and I hope that every Fulbright scholar will have the chance to participate in one before starting his/her classes in the US.

## OVERCOMING CULTURE SHOCK AND ANXIETY

By: Raed Bahelah, Yemen

The way we think and the behavior we conduct with people, are generated partly in our genes but shaped greatly by our cultural backgrounds.

The first trip for me abroad is this time! Yes, the first time I leave Yemen – my beloved country – I come to the United States! It was a great concern for me to come here, this worry built inside me and turned to stress straight few days just before my trip, and it was grown up more and more with every new airport we arrive to, I was feeling like I am now more dependent upon myself, none whom I can trust, language barrier created a great part of that stress.

But, the first thing relieved part of my anxiety was the Fulbright gateway orientation, where many diverse nationalities come at the same time in the same place, with one goal: cultural interaction! The lectures and orientation tips were priceless, I always remember what to do at many places I go to here in New Orleans; in the house, school, street and even when I eat food! I try to practice what I learned there but with time, I feel that I can create new ways of conduct to people surrounding me, and maybe; in the next orientation I can attend, not as new arriver, but as an advisor!

I think I am very lucky, because I joined MSA here at Tulane University, and I spent Ramadan for the first time in my life in a different way. Also, I invited my colleagues and roommates to attend the Iftar (breaking fast at sunset) who are non- Muslims, to attend this cultural activity which they enjoyed very much, they enjoyed food, and attended many sessions of guidance and prayer.

My housemates are distinguished people! They help me a lot, and one of them is a bike –expert , he fixed my flat tire twice, sometimes we enjoy eating together and many times we exchange talks in many aspects, including religion and policy.

No more stress, no more cultural shock, the above factors helped me a lot to absorb a lot of my hidden worries, and I am going on more and more.

## LEARN THE WORLD IN AMERICA

By: Mirna Khairallah, Lebanon



It has been almost 3 weeks that I am here in Arkansas and I still feel I'm new to this whole thing. In other words everyday I'm still meeting new people and introducing myself.

I noticed that for the past 3 weeks, every single day I told someone my name. Since they would not be able to say it from the first time I would have to repeat it and then tell them that I am from Lebanon and that I am studying Food Science. In some, actually most, cases I had to explain what "Food Science" is. Surprisingly in fewer cases, I had to explain where Lebanon is.

First week in Fayetteville was a good start to get to know some people and the area. I arrived a bit early so there weren't many students. Mainly it was the clean roads, the green everywhere, the rules for driving that everyone respects, the huge Walmarts, and the college parties which marked me most.

Second week, orientation started and that's where I met people from the States, Mexico, Austria, Germany, France, Serbia, Colombia, Nigeria, India, Kosovo, Spain, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, China, Korea, Vietnam, Pakistan, Slovakia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Japan, Ukraine, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Kenya, Brazil, Peru, and I'm sure I forgot some. But yes, in less than one week, I was able to meet people from all those different countries.

(Mirna Khairallah at Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, University of Arkansas—left)

## MY FIRST DAYS IN THE U.S.

By: Mai Mosad, Egypt

First of all, I would like to say that I am still in my first month in the States, but really what I have witnessed here is not measured by the length of my stay as it can be measured by the experience I have acquired.

Second, although the gap between my country, Egypt, and the United States on different levels and dimensions, I really love my country, and what I am writing right now is not a theme of comparison between two states as it is a way of maximizing benefits and memorizing those benefits for the sake of my country when I will return back.

Third, one of my appreciations to MY hosting country, the States, is the true and real appreciation to education whether undergraduates or graduates. Yes, I am really a TA in Cairo University, but I never witnessed that kind of facilitations to university members as here in the States in medical insurance, transportation fees, cinema and flight tickets, which I really hope to find the same in Egypt.

I arrived safely to my address on the last day of Ramadan; the coming day was the first of the Muslim's feast (Al Fitr). I was really sorry for not celebrating it in Egypt, but wow, I celebrated it here in the States my way. It was the first time for me to pray Al –Fitr pray! Even in Cairo, I never did. I found a very high degree of tolerance. The multinational life in California is very rich and cool. The mosque was very crowded. It was a Sunday, an official holiday for all. Although the crowd and the noise, there were not any objections from the near population and despite there were no places to park the cars till the pray ends, no one objected... Really this touched me. Especially when I began to pray and felt that we all are under ONE sky, each religion has its own celebrations and occasions and enjoys it. I don't know if that doesn't exist in Egypt because it doesn't include that type of heterogeneity, or because the area of tolerance is not that like here in the States.

The most important is the campus life, yes it is a life, it is not just for academic study and classes. The campus includes tennis stadiums ,festivals, swimming pools. I have never seen or thought that any campus may have all these faces of fun and excitement. I was used to the Cairo University campus, although is very prestigious and has its historical significance, it is limited to the academic life. I will never forget the huge library...WOW ,whatever book I need I can get, even it is not there. All staff is available online and even the Arabic books that I failed to find in Egypt, I found them here.

October 19<sup>th</sup> arrived, and the Fulbright Welcome event began. I met Fulbrighters all over the World from Far East Asia to Europe. I was really touched by that ceremony and I felt how prestigious to be a Fulbrighter! My father accompanied me to the event which was at UCLA faculty center ,he was more than welcomed. The dinner was delicious. Really it was a marvelous day and there we be another Fulbrighter event in December.



## FULBRIGHTER PHOTOS



Hadeel AbuKwaik (Gaza) in San Francisco at the Golden Gate Bridge. "I enjoyed every small detail about this city: the walking pigeons on the streets, music players, the artists, et cetera."



Nada Essakli (Morocco) representing Morocco at the International Bazaar's Fashion Show at Lehigh University.



Habeb Habeb (Iraq) on a retreat to Big Bear Mountain, picture on retreat with the Dean of the Public Health, David Dyjack



Ousai Gharaibeh (Jordan) and family at Niagra Falls in Summer 2009. They traveled the West Coast and then visited Boston, New York City, and Washington DC as well. "We had a blast!"



Mirna Khairallah (Lebanon) at the University of Arkansas, spray-painted a t-shirt with 'Beirut' on the front at the University event, 'Razorbash'



Faez Ahmed and fellow Fulbright Scholars outside of the United Nations in New York City

## FULBRIGHT ALUMNI UPDATES AND WEBSITE

**Samar El Khoudary****Gaza, 2007, University of Pittsburgh**

Samar El Khoudary is currently working on a very interesting and important project in the US: The Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN). SWAN is a multi-site longitudinal, epidemiologic study designed to examine the health of women during their middle years.

**Mohammad M. Naffakh****Syria, 2002, Duquesne University**

Currently, Mohammad M. Naffakh is still managing the institutional development unit in the private consulting business that he established 2 years ago with a couple of partners. In the meantime, he is working on capturing all knowledge regarding the "Balanced Score Card" technique and implementing it in institutions in Syria.

**Fadwa Chaker****Morocco, 2009, Duke University**

Since May 2008, Fadwa Chaker has been writing in her blog that addresses the education system problem in Morocco ([www.fadwa.org](http://www.fadwa.org)). In the same spirit, she has been working on a booklet entitled, "Improving the Education System in Morocco : Collection of experiences abroad."

**Loubna Hanna****Morocco, 2000, Pennsylvania State University**

Dr. Loubna Hanna is currently working on a new book project focusing on Muslim Youth. She has completed multi-sited ethnographic research over the last year to address specific questions related to the lives/experiences of youth in the globalized world. In early June, she presented a paper at Princeton University's Politics of North Africa Workshop organized by the Near Eastern Department.

**Yaser Natour****Jordan, 2000, University of Florida**

As an associate professor, Yaser Natour is working on helping Jordanian Speech-Language Pathologists formulate the Jordanian Speech and Hearing Association. He also volunteered to be an editor in chief for the magazine "the Examiner for Hearing and Speech."

**Ziad Bentahar****Morocco, 2005, The Pennsylvania State University**

Ziad now teaches Arabic Language and Culture at Brown University. His research is driven by a will to frame North African literary and cultural studies within an African context, rather than a solely Middle Eastern one. His recent publications include an essay on Frantz Fanon in Algeria, and an article on Moroccan music forthcoming in *Wasafiri*.

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**ExchangesConnect's 2nd Annual Video Contest** here:

<http://exchanges.state.gov/news/2009/exchangesconnect-videocontest.html>. Submissions due: January 12, 2010.

**New Fulbright Library:** <https://alumni.state.gov/fulbright/library>

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**Kate DeBoer, Program Director**

**Elisa O'Keefe**, Senior Program Officer to Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, and Alumni Relations  
[eokeefe@amideast.org](mailto:eokeefe@amideast.org)  
(202) 776-9623

**Bina Sheladia**, Program Officer to Egypt, West Bank, Gaza and Algeria  
[bsheladia@amideast.org](mailto:bsheladia@amideast.org)  
(202) 776-9655

**Joseph Pearce**, Program Officer to Iraq  
[jpearce@amideast.org](mailto:jpearce@amideast.org)  
(202) 776-9668

**Heather Yuzvenko**, Program Officer to Jordan, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, and UAE  
[hyuzvenko@amideast.org](mailto:hyuzvenko@amideast.org)  
(202) 776-9663

**Francesca Alesi**, Senior Program Assistant to Jordan, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, UAE  
[falesi@amideast.org](mailto:falesi@amideast.org)  
(202) 776-9658

**Kea Greene**, Program Assistant to Iraq  
[kgreene@amideast.org](mailto:kgreene@amideast.org)  
(202) 776-9691

**Stephanie Whitlatch**, Program Assistant to Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, and Alumni Relations  
[swhitlatch@amideast.org](mailto:swhitlatch@amideast.org)  
(202) 776-9645

**Sara Sirota**, Program Assistant to Egypt, West Bank, Gaza, and Algeria  
[ssirota@amideast.org](mailto:ssirota@amideast.org)  
(202) 776-9653

**Julianne Tootell**, Intern  
[jtootell@amideast.org](mailto:jtootell@amideast.org)

**Kelly Flanagan**, Intern  
[kflanagan@amideast.org](mailto:kflanagan@amideast.org)

