

Fulbrighter

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

Leaders of the Future

Fulbright Students Fuse Learning and Fun

Fall 2007 was an eventful semester for Fulbright Students from the Middle East. Over seventy-five students from eleven countries arrived in August to begin their studies. Although most students enrolled in graduate programs there were a number of PhD and non-degree students. Students participated in a variety of orientation and leadership training activities in their new surroundings. Muhammad Husami went with Purdue University to the Tecumseh Leadership Center, where he participated in activities focused on leadership training, team building, and relationship development. Many students celebrated Halloween and Thanksgiving for the first time. Mutahar Al-Mutadha, from Yemen, celebrated Thanksgiving twice, once with fellow Fulbrighters and once with the family of an American classmate. Other students took advantage of the holidays by traveling throughout the United States.



Muhammad Husami participates in a team building activity at the Tecumseh Leadership Center

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Congratulations to Recent Graduates!

Rim Hajji (Morocco) graduated from Florida International University with an MA in Asian Studies.

Riham Alhossary (Gaza) graduated from Binghamton University with an MA in Social Sciences.

Shoqi Al Maktary (Yemen) graduated from Eastern Mennonite University with an MA in Conflict Transformation.

Fatima Al Haddad (Bahrain) graduated from the University of Tennessee with an MS in Public Health.

Ala Ghawas (Bahrain) graduate from Emerson College with an MA in Integrated Marketing & Communication.

Majda Zadjali (Oman) graduated from Eastern Michigan University with an MBA.



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FULBRIGHT



Husain Al Qaseer is a Bahraini Fulbright grantee studying at the University of Denver.

Having volunteered for a number of nonprofits in Bahrain during my high-school years, and having volunteered for nonprofits here in Denver during my undergraduate years, I viewed the opportunity given to me by the Fulbright Program as a chance to further expand my experience in the nonprofit world and try to make a change for an organization or two. I am a graduate student at the University of Denver, on my way to

Volunteer Work: A Medium for Change in Today's World

completing an M.S. in Finance and an M.B.A. in Not-for-Profit Management. During the first few quarters of my program, I volunteered for a couple of nonprofits in Denver, including the Food Bank of the Rockies. However, through one of my M.B.A. classes, I got introduced to the Alta Vista Center for Autism.

Alta Vista is a nonprofit treatment center for children with autism and related disorders. They provide valuable services that help the children reach their full potential. They also help the families of those children better assess and cope with the child's condition. For my class, we were assigned the task of providing consultancy work for Alta Vista in order to help them create a strategy that covers financial and fund management, marketing, and organizational structure. Since I worked for Ernst & Young Bahrain on the corporate finance side, I saw this as a great opportunity to use my expertise in the finance world to

help a nonprofit better manage its finances and raise more funds.

The final strategic plan was submitted to the Alta Vista Center, and the board members and management saw it as a great plan for future growth. In the days following the final presentation, I was asked by the management to come in and help the organization out in implementing the plan. Also, I was asked to join the development committee at Alta Vista in order to help them with the fundraising process. It has been a great experience so far, and I look forward to serving the Center throughout my time here in Denver. Nonprofits in the United States and in other regions of the world value the efforts of volunteers. Whether its doing some hard labor for the Food Bank of the Rockies, or doing consultancy work for Alta Vista, I have always finished the day with a great sense of accomplishment. Every kind of volunteer work helps create a difference in today's world.

Interested in Volunteering?

There are a large variety of different opportunities for those interested in volunteering in their communities. Sometimes, the hardest part is finding a volunteering opportunity that fits your personality and objectives. Volunteer opportunities in most communities include helping out at homeless shelters or food banks, teaching with literacy and learning organizations, tutoring or mentoring at after school programs, working with environmental organizations, visiting patients at hospitals, and the list goes on.

To find volunteer opportunities near you, check out the following websites:

- Justgive.org
- Volunteermatch.org
- Idealist.org
- Volunteer.gov



Current Student Updates

Majd Musa, Jordan, co-authored the book *Exploring the Built Environment: Essays on the Presentations of Diwan al-Mimar and Affiliated Public Lectures*, published in August 2007. She was also elected to membership in The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, based on her high academic achievements as a PhD student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Sawsan Gharaibeh, Jordan, joined the Submission Review Board of the *Virginia Journal of International Law*. VJLI is the oldest continuously-published, student-edited law journal in the United States devoted exclusively to public and private international law.

Marihan Mehelba, Egypt, was selected as one of the winners of the Electronic Theatre Controls, Inc. eighth annual LDI Student Sponsorship 2007. She was provided an all-expense paid trip to the LDI tradeshow, where she was able to learn about the latest technologies and experience behind-the-scenes goings-on in the ETC booth.

Rami Wahsheh, Jordan, co-authored two research publications in November 2007. The first was titled "A Method for Cross Talk Reduction in Crossed Strip Waveguides" and the second, "The Effect of Changing the Position of the Inner Taper Crystals on the Coupling Efficiency between a Silica Waveguide and a Planar Photonic Crystal." His wife, Tasneem

Al-Hamdan gave birth to a baby girl in March 2007. Her name is Raneem, which consists of the first two letters of Rami's name and the last four letters of Tasneem's name.

Shoqi Maktary, Yemen, held a Capstone Presentation at Eastern Mennonite University where he presented his research on mainstreaming cultural sensitivity in the processes of conflict transformation and development.

Miray Zaki, Egypt, was recently awarded Dean's List recognition for her 2006-2007 academic achievements. Additionally, her team was selected to compete in the inaugural African MBA Microfinance Competition by Knox Lawrence.



Zied Mhersi is a Tunisian Fulbright grantee at the University of Washington. He left Seattle to spend the summer and fall in Sudan for research purposes. He was sponsored by Health Alliance International, a campus-based NGO working in the scale up of HIV treatment. While he was in Sudan, he traveled around visiting voluntary counseling centers and advising health care personnel on ways to increase HIV testing and to better manage HIV-infected patients. He also did a national study (including the Darfur region) on stigmas among health care providers.



The Texas Renaissance Festival

Zainab Allaith is a Bahraini Fulbright Grantee pursuing her MA at Texas A&M University.

I was complaining to one of my friends about having missed all the Halloween fun because I had an evening class on that night. That's when she suggested that we go to the Texas Renaissance Festival. I had no idea what that was, but I agreed to go with her with no hesitation whatsoever.

So we drove to Plantersville last Saturday. My friend was dressed in a beautiful long black gown that she had sewn herself. She explained to me that the theme for that weekend was "Barbarian Invasion." As we approached the entrance, she said, "Let me warn you, this is a human zoo!" Of course, I did not know what to expect!

I walked in to find a countless number of barbarians gathered in the forest. It was as though I had been detached from the surrounding city and taken back in time. I felt out of place at the beginning. I wanted to rent a costume, but the line was too long and my friend did not want to miss the "THE DEAD BOB SHO" (The Dead Bob Show). Hundreds of people had gathered there before us. There were no empty seats, so we had to stand in the back.

Minutes later, the most hilarious a glassblowing stall, a black-skeleton came out and presented the most amusing show. He got all the audience, including myself, involved with him. He would call out, "Hey audience" and we had to respond, "Hey what?" Everyone was laughing, screaming, and clapping their hands.

The rest of the day was crazy. Beautifully dressed women were dancing, noble knights were jousting, and children were excited about the elephant and camel rides. I really enjoyed watching the Birds of Prey show with the hawks, eagles, and owls. I also enjoyed looking at the beautiful Raman, Water, and Rose Gardens. And what can be better than a huge bazaar? The bazaar itself was a piece of art. The stalls sold costumes, masks, jewelry, hats, and anything else you can think of. There was also

a glassblowing stall, a blacksmith, a metal forger, and broom-makers. Of course, I should not forget to mention the delicious food! I personally had a Polish dish which I had never tried before. I regret to say that I cannot remember its name now.

I really can't wait to celebrate this festival once again next year. I am already planning to get a costume for myself to wear for this event. The Texas Renaissance Festival is one of the largest theme parks which brings the 16th century to life. I really recommend you to go back in history and take part in this magical event, if you ever get the chance to do so. For more information about this festival, you may visit <http://www.texrenfest.com/home.html>.



Zainab Allaith and friend at the Festival.

Second Year Students Give Advice:

While getting an education is important, don't forget to have fun. Be involved. Don't just stay within your comfort zone; instead, push that comfort zone and try new things. — *Husain Al Qaseer, Bahrain, University of*

Denver
Mutual understanding between people of different cultures would definitely bridge the gap between the world's cultures. I encourage new Fulbrighters to be engaged in Fulbright activities and also other activities that would give you a unique opportunity to be exposed to US culture. — *Rami Wahsheh, Jordan, Rochester*

Institute of Technology

First Impressions

I consider my Fulbright experience as a wonderful adventure. Such an adventure started when I reached Casablanca's airport, said goodbye to my parents and decided to face the situation. It was my first trip alone. My great joy was to find people welcoming me and other Fulbright students. The first thing I saw in the US were these huge green fields. Everything was so big! I believe the beginning of each thing is the most difficult part. Finding housing was a really big problem. I am very satisfied with the rhythm of studies at USF. I find my studies very good and I'm very happy that the professors encourage any effort done by the students. I appreciate the openness of the American system and the opportunity it gives for students to freely express themselves. The system values students' thought and the various backgrounds they are coming from. I believe that I am still in the beginning of an exciting adventure and that there are still other things to discover.

- Amina Iraqi, Morocco, University of South Florida



Amina Iraqi in Mississippi for Pre-Academic Training

When I arrived here, everything was completely new to me, totally different from what I used to see and experience for about 29 years. Seeing how people live and how they interact with each other made it difficult for me to mingle with them the first couple of weeks. Being so considerate of other peoples' feelings, I didn't know how to communicate effectively with others which made this challenge harder. Another challenge that I had was the weather. I thought I had moved in the summer, and as I know the summer was always sunny with a rare chance of rain. It hardly ever rained in the summer in my country. However, when I was here, the second day, it was raining cats and dogs. Fortunately with being more open-minded, more persistent and determined to enjoy this unique experience I was given, I managed to overcome many of these obstacles. Nowadays, I have many American and international friends. We are having fun and enjoying our time. I am more used to the system and style of life and hope things will get better and better in the future.

- Muhammad Al Husami, Syria, Purdue University

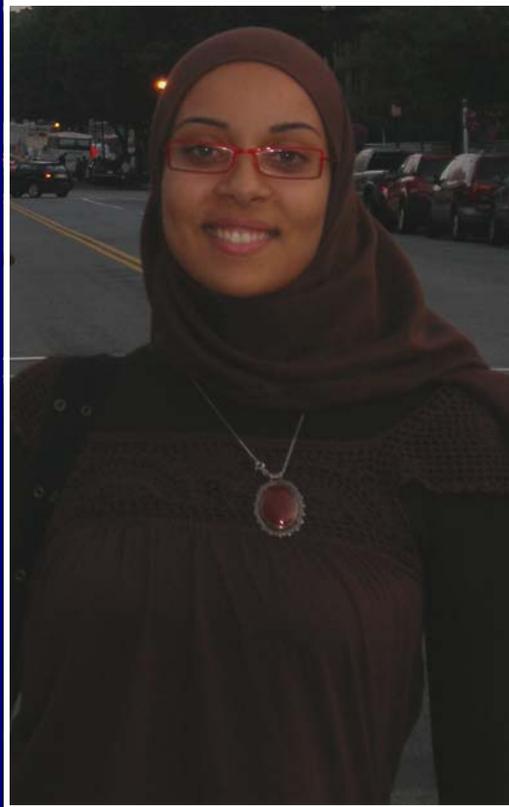
After four months of being in the United States, I can fairly say that my expectations are being met enormously. From the academic program that I have chosen, International Affairs, to the Fletcher School at Tufts, to the Boston-area life, I feel highly privileged. The challenge I constantly face here is to remind myself that I can't do it all. Among academic priorities and obligations, extracurricular activities and events taking place and the joy of social life entertained by a rich body of students from everywhere, one finds it very hard to come to a balance. One important thing is that I'm getting to know more and more about America. With every passing day, I'm learning something new about life and people here. This is helping me in changing some of my preconceived ideas, and allowing me to better understand and appreciate "the American way" of doing things, at the same time appreciating more and more the place and region where I come from.

- Alain Hasrouny, Lebanon, Tufts University

The stereotypes that have been haunting Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. ever since 9/11 have had a very strong influence on Middle Eastern students who wish to study in the U.S. Many students changed their plans and opted to shift their study plans from the U.S. to Europe out of fear of being subject to discrimination or prejudice because of their ethnicity and/or their religion.

When I first decided to apply for a Fulbright grant, I had mixed feelings; an enthusiasm to pursue my postgraduate education in one of the world's best law schools as I have always dreamed of as well as a fear of the unknown.

Getting accepted first by the Fulbright Program and then by a number of great law schools, I suddenly realized that I am very close to realizing what I have been dreaming of. But it also hit me that I don't know how the community will perceive me. A couple of years ago, I had decided to start wearing the veil, the Muslim *Hijab*. My appearance therefore enabled people on the streets to easily identify me as a Muslim.



Shaimaa Elian

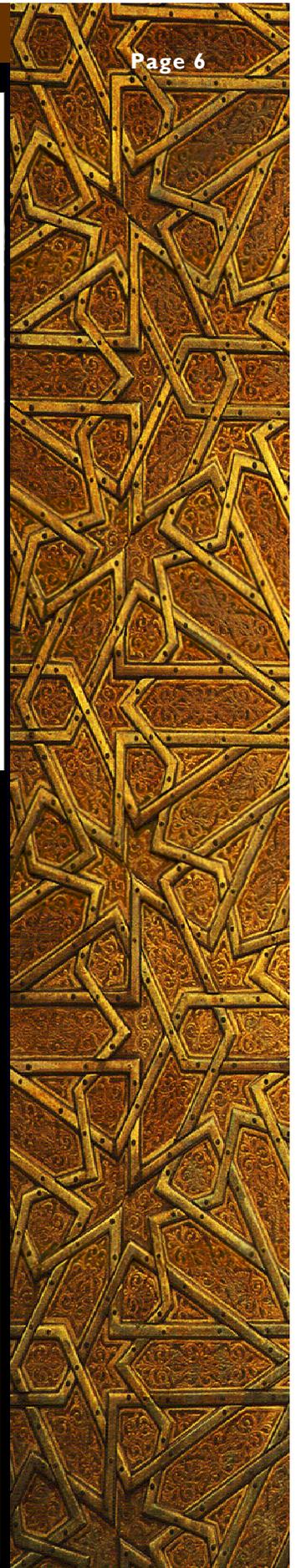
Having been living in Washington, D.C. for almost 3 months now, I admit that I haven't had one incident where people were harsh, rude or discriminatory towards me. In such a heterogeneous city, everybody blends in and people are interested to explore and to understand the different. At school, I was elected as one of the student leaders in a students' organization and I got to know so many people from different backgrounds. We celebrated our cultural diversity in many ways. We even had an *Iftar* in *Ramadan*, the meal when Muslims break fast after sunset during the fasting month. Students wanted to understand why and how Muslims fast.

In a world where political leaders have failed to conciliate our cultures, I strongly advocate for this kind of cultural and educational exchange that will confront us with the unknown and feared and help rectify our mutual misconceptions.

-Shaimaa Elian, Egypt, Georgetown University

Sometimes I still can't believe that I'm here in the United States doing what I've dreamed to do for my whole life. It's a really new experience for me from both personal and professional aspects. At the beginning, I was really worried that I wouldn't be able to adjust here, but now I can say that I'm really feeling like I'm between my family, friends, and in other words, like at home. It's all about the way that they teach you here. I should not waste any minute here, and I should always expect more and more knowledge and new things to learn.

– Nizar Al Wazir, Gaza, University of Massachusetts, Amherst



Coming to America... from Lebanon



Samia Badih is a Lebanese Fulbright Grantee pursuing her MA in Broadcast Journalism at the University of Maryland.

Three months ago, I made the biggest move in my life so far. I said goodbye to my family and friends in Sidon, south of Lebanon, and jumped on the flight to the United States to study broadcast journalism at the University of Maryland. I had been to seminars, talked to many students, and searched online, while preparing for my stay, but nothing has prepared me for hard-hitting reality.

I was ready to start a new chapter in life, and determined to face any challenges that would come my way. I came to the United States through the Fulbright Program, an exchange program proposed by Senator J. William Fulbright who believed in the importance of promoting "mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries of the world." I too believe in the need for mutual understanding. That is why I want to become a broadcast journalist. I want to report the reality of my world and maybe contribute to a better understanding of our world.

My first encounter with the 'new world' was at Charles De Gaulle airport in France. While I was standing in line to take my con-

necting flight to Washington D.C. I was directed for random security check. I realized that the other passengers lined up for the random security check were two Lebanese students and a veiled Muslim woman. Refusing to jump into any assumptions, I scanned the other passengers boarding in hopes of finding one who had an orange sticker on his/her passport. But I failed to spot one. Apparently that insignificant sticker meant I had to go through the "random" security check. How random could that be?

I made it safely to the United States and to the apartment where I was supposed to be staying in. It was an empty apartment and I was without a phone, internet and a bed to sleep on. As unsafe as Lebanon sounds to many people, that night all I wanted was to be back home again.

Today, three months later, I feel safe again. Coming to the United States has changed my life in so many different ways. Despite the 'random' security checks which I regularly go through at airports, I have met some of the nicest people in my life and have made ever lasting friendships. For the first time in my life, I have become friends with people different from me – African Americans, Hispanics, and Jews. They are just as nice as the people I know back home.

For the first time in my life, I dressed up for Halloween. For the first time in my life, I celebrated Thanksgiving with my friend's family and friends. They took me in as part of their family and applauded my courage to be away from my own home and family for the sake of better education.

Today, I feel indebted to every friend and every instructor who have gone out of their way to make me feel welcome and more at home. As Christmas break approaches, I feel happy to be going back to Lebanon knowing that the next time I leave for Maryland, I will come to friends waiting at the airport and a warm bed at home.



Zainab Allaith at the Gateway Orientation Program Dinner

Mutahar Al-Murtadha enjoying the fall in Vermont.



Mutahar Al-Murtadha celebrates Thanksgiving with international students.

Marihan Mehelba and other winners of the Electronic Theatre Controls, Inc. eighth annual LDI Student Sponsorship 2007.



Raneen, daughter of Rami Wahsheh and Tasneem Al-Hamdan, dressed for Halloween.



The Fulbright Program in the Middle East and North Africa Expands

The Fulbright Program has expanded to include Algeria. Amideast will administer the program and has also taken on administration of the Program in Iraq. Heather Hughes is the new Program Officer and Kea Greene is the Program Assistant. Grantees for the 2008-2009 academic year have been nominated and placement is currently underway. The part of the Fulbright Program administered by Amideast now includes fifteen countries from throughout the Middle East. The Fulbright Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.



Fulbright Resources on the Web

Alumni.state.gov:

A global community of all past and current participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs.

- Find fellow alumni in your country and in all regions of the world.
- Share your ideas, learn from your fellow alumni and find out about alumni activities being implemented in communities the world over.
- Search for job and grant opportunities and post your resume or academic articles.
- Prepare your research through State Alumni's Online Resource Center, and access over 20,000 U.S. and international periodicals, newspapers, and more!

The Fulbright Association:

www.fulbrightalumni.org

The Fulbright Association is the membership organization of Fulbright alumni and supporters committed to fostering international awareness and understanding through:

- Advocating increased worldwide support for Fulbright exchanges;
- Enriching the Fulbright experience; and
- Facilitating lifelong interaction among alumni and current participants.

The Fulbright Listserv:

The unofficial e-mail listserv was developed by Fulbright grantee Christos Siopis and serves two purposes:

- Linking new grantees and their peers already in the United States; and
- A social and cultural discussion forum for all Fulbrighters, old and new.

If you would like to become a member of the group, you should send an e-mail to the following address: listserv@lists.ufl.edu. Leave the subject line blank and in the main text (body) write "subscribe Fulbright-I."

Emergency Safety Tips

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.
- If you evacuate, remember to bring your passport, DS-2019, cell phone, cell phone charger and any other valuable items.
- Call your AMIDEAST advisor to inform us of your safety, location, and contact information. AMIDEAST has a toll-free number: 1-800-368-5720. Continue to call or email each day to update.
- 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.

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