

How the Fulbright scholarship changed my life

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Before starting my story , I would like to give a small glimpse of the FLTA program, Beginning in July 2001 ,the purpose of the FLTA ,Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program is to strengthen the instruction of strategic foreign languages at U S colleges and universities and to increase the fellow FLTAs their English language proficiency and extend their knowledge of the cultures and customs of the United States. FLTA fellows also interact with the host community in conversation groups, extracurricular activities and community outreach projects be it in political ,economic or cultural domains.

In 2004,I was awarded the Fulbright teaching scholarship. I was at Austin College in Sherman not far from Dallas, Texas.2004-2005 had been a tremendously successful year.I have learned so much both professionally and personally. More than that,the experience I had with my students was incomparable.

I devoted up to 20 hours per week to my duties at Austin College.I taught introductory/ intermediate Arabic and Moroccan civilization.My students were always curious to know about the Arabic civilization with its poets, prominent writers, Arabic calligraphy, the history of Morocco with its rich culture and all the issues and the current events happening in my country in the political ,economic and social domains.

For that, I organized extracurricular activities that included lectures on Islam ,women position in the Middle East and many other current issues in the Arab world and this is how I created opportunities for the American students to interact .

I also educated students on Ramadan and other significant aspects of the Islamic world.I was a member at the Muslim Students Association(MSA) at the college where I used to host many cultural and religious events through which I invited students and faculty members to share that experience .Everyone at the association prepared his/her ethnic food and right after the event we organized a panel discussion about Islam and its aspects.

I was responsible of a culture class at the campus where I met with the students and raised discussions about the Moroccan culture with its beliefs and values. Through all this, I found a genuine curiosity among my students and all the people I met to know more about my country and culture.

I went on fulfilling the goal of the Fulbright program by taking part in many academic events namely the Model United Nations at the United Nations headquarters in New York where I had the opportunity to work with other other university students on International issues namely the refugees in the Darfur ,Female infanticide and gender and equity.

In just nine months ,I achieved many things:teaching the language,sharing my ,Culture,participating in a range of cultural activities ,being exposed to many religions and quenching my thirst to know about each belief through that rich multiculturalism that the United States has.

This experience has also developed a long lasting personal and professional contacts that have enabled me to continue the exchange of thoughts and ideas from different viewpoints.It also made students and friend I met in the US to come to Morocco ,stay in my house and experience the real Moroccan life

My Fulbright experience has been incredibly rich and satisfying ,I have gained far more than I have given ,but the opportunity to give has been a significant part of both my academic, professional and personal journey.

Today I look back at this year with much nostalgia, remembering the workshops and conferences I attended and the classes I taught. But at no point I feel that this experience is over ,it still continues in my every day life ,here in Morocco at the Faculty of letters and Human Sciences



where I prepare my Master in Communication studies, when I meet up with people at the national and international level and by continuing to promote my culture, respect for diversity, tolerance and most of all further our mutual understanding.

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