## JONAE COPE, EGYPT, 2012

Portland State University Oregon



y time spent in Cairo was a perfect mix of academic study and cultural immersion. The courses were difficult, but not so much that I could not enjoy them. I feel like I learned more Arabic in two months in Egypt than I did in a year at my home university. This was because I was not allowed to speak English in class. All of my courses were taught while abroad was giving in Arabic, and if we did not understand a topic, we had to try our best to explain our questions in Arabic, with as little English as possible.

Being immersed in the culture and living in the center of Cairo, I was able to interact with Egyptian nationals on a daily basis, and, learn the Egyptian dialect.

Between my daily interactions and the classes at the American University in Cairo, speaking in Arabic about multiple subjects became significantly easier. This has been critical to my Arabic language major and Linguistics minor.

In June 2012, I witnessed the election of Mohammed Morsi to his presidency, which was a landmark occasion in Egyptian history. I consider myself very blessed to have witnessed this event. It was fascinating to see changes in government policies, as well as observe another country's election process.

Another great opportunity I had presentations to the Egyptian students about college life in American schools. I was contacted by AMIDEAST (America-Mideast Educational and Training Services Inc.) for this responsibility. Egyptian students had the chance to ask questions about being a Muslim in the United States and were also very interested in my experiences as a Muslim convert. This



opportunity put me in contact with AMIDEAST's offices, and I am hoping to work with them in the future.

While this was only a small part of my experience abroad, I am already trying to find a way to return. I will be graduating soon and I would like to pursue my master's and doctoral degrees in the Middle East. This experience opened my mind to living and working in the Middle East, and has aided in my decision to where I would like to continue my studies after I graduate.

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## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

During my time abroad, I ran a blog on Tumblr sharing my experiences, and pictures with those who wished to read about them. I emailed the links to my professors so that any students who wanted to follow me could. I discussed the tourist sites, culture

shock, changing views, and the anxiety everyone experienced during the elections. This was a great way to share my experiences to a large audience and be able to reach students on many levels. When I returned to the U.S. I gave presentations in Arabic language

classes about my time abroad, things to expect abroad, and the Gilman Scholarship. I showed them the website, the award process, and options for Follow-on Service Projects.