



Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

Report Title: Muslim Perspectives on America: A Summer in the Middle East **Name:** Dennis Kass

Other Team Members:

Program: Chicago Program

Trip Dates: 06/30/2011 - 07/29/2011 **Location Visited:** Istanbul, Turkey

Post Fellowship Reporting Template: PFR Template 01

Project Summary: Conflict with the Muslim World has dominated US foreign policy for decades. As a consequence of this contemporary history, including the events of September 11th, 2011, the American public largely sees the "war on terrorism" a conflict between the United States and Islam. Our young people are growing up in the 9/11 era, an era that in their minds places Muslims in conflict with the ideals of America. The summer of 2011, I traveled to the Middle East to explore whether Muslims similarly viewed this conflict in those terms. I traveled through Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt, exploring an area of the world largely thought inaccessible and unwelcoming to the United States. Just as importantly, I had the amazing opportunity to meet with and interview people about the seemingly insurmountable conflict between us. In addition to unimaginable personal growth about Muslim history, culture, and religion, I experienced the amazing hospitality and tolerance of Muslims there. My students will learn that for Muslims in the Middle East, conflicts with the United States are about US foreign policy, not anti-Americanism and Islam. Based on my interviews with people from across the region, Muslims truly appreciate the American people, but have struggled in the face of what they perceive as undemocratic policies throughout the region. These unique and personal accounts will shape and transform the instructional experience of students in Chicago. Thanks to Fund for Teachers, this experience will help shift the dialogue in a new, more informed, and constructive way for young people in America.

Career Impact: *I gained a new appreciation for Muslim history, culture, and religion.

*I created a new curriculum unit reflecting the unique perspectives of Muslims from the Middle East.

*I will incorporate units on the often ignored or misunderstood aspects of Islam, the Middle East, and Arabs into the curriculum of my school.

*I will more accurately portray and discuss conflicts and issues with the Middle East in my classes.

Classroom/Community Impact:*Students will have access to primary sources on Muslims' perceptions of America including written and video interviews.

*Students will see documents and materials from the Middle East including videos, pictures, and other items.

*Students will be able to explore Middle Eastern culture, history, and religion guided by a teacher who directly experienced it.

*Students will focus on and learn about the diverse perspectives, culture, and religious beliefs of Middle Easterners

Open Response: *A Primary Source bank with interviews of Muslims across Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt.

*A DBQ unit on Muslims perceptions of America including activities and lessons for teachers to use with students.

*A photographic/video history of my trip throughout the region including both Christian, Jewish, and Muslim historical and cultural sites.

Quote: This Fund for Teacher grant experience will transform the way my students and I personally understand the culture, religion, and history of the Middle East, especially current conflicts with the United States.

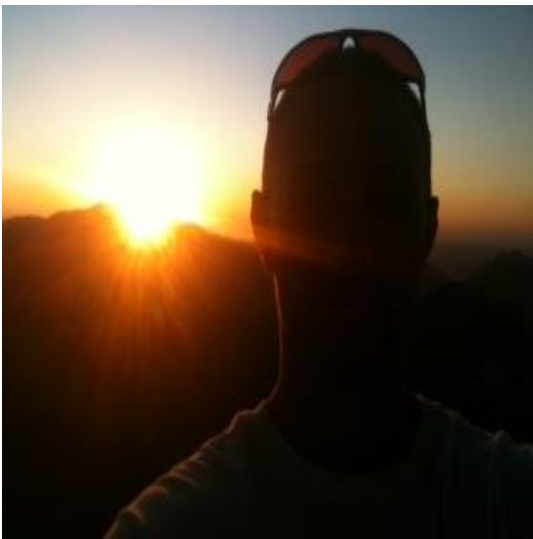
Photos:



At the Blue Mosque in Istanbul Turkey



Riding a Camel at the Pyramids in Egypt



Sunset on Mount Sinai in Egypt



On a faluca sailing up the Nile River



At an ancient Egyptian temple



At Petra in Jordan



At the Sphinx and Pyramids



At the top of a Turkish Mountain Nemrut with ancient Greek statues