

B.A. IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



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FORUM DES JEUNES AMBASSADEURS DE LA FRANCOPHONIE DES AMÉRIQUES

Margo Sullivan
(BAIS, 2013)

As a child in Lafayette, I had the chance to be brought up surrounded by Cajun culture and the French language. Learning bits of Cajun French at home and standard French in Lafayette's French Immersion schools



Eating my first lobster with another ambassador from Saskatchewan

tions between Francophones and Francophiles of Quebec, Canada, and the Americas.”

This summer I had the honor to represent Louisiana at Le Centre's 2010 Fo-

shaped me into the proud French speaking Cajun I am today. Many students studying French focus so much on Europe while overlooking the fact that the Americas are home to 20 million French speakers. My interest in learning about other

French cultures of the Americas lead me to le Centre de la Francophonie des Ameriques, a Quebec based organization that works to “promote and develop a promising future for the French language in the context of cultural diversity by focusing on strengthening and enriching rela-

rum des jeunes ambassadeurs de la francophonie des amériques (Forum of Young French Language Ambassadors of the Americas). Sixty 18-35 year old ambassadors from North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean gathered in Moncton New Brunswick at



Raju Adhikari
(BAIS, 2011)

A gorgeous, charismatic, teenage girl came running toward me and offered me each of her cheeks. Unlike anyone else in that situation, my instantaneous reaction was to step backward. I could clearly see the sur-

prise on her face, marked now with wrinkled forehead and raised eyebrows. Suddenly I heard someone say, “He is from Nepal,” “*Il est nepalais.*” It was one of the most unforgettable incidents of my life to that point. It was the first day and my first moments with my host family in France. Their greeting style required people encountering each

Why are we divided?

other to press their cheeks together. But I could manage only to utter a simple “*Namaste*” with both my palms close together and my head bowed down. It was a very humbling moment for me; I suddenly saw my ignorance of their lives and their culture. I was an antiquated and ignorant fellow from a poor Asian country where people ex-

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR



FORUM (CONTINUED)

l'Université de Moncton for the forum. Moncton, a commercial hub of the Canadian Maritimes, is a truly bilingual city where all public services are offered in French and English. It is also a vibrant city where multiculturalism is embraced and encouraged.

In this setting we, the ambassadors, discovered each other's unique cultures and histories through workshops, discussions, and presentations. In daily group activities we exchanged experiences and ideas concerning

art, culture, the environment, solidarity, and education. I became friends with other ambassadors from places like Haiti,

Brazil, and Argentina. From each of these friendships I learned something new and became more internationally aware. Finally, each ambassador used the forum to develop a project that enriches their local French speaking community.

As part of my project, I am currently working with other Louisianians to put on "Grand Reveil Acadien" (www.gra2011.org), a gathering in fall 2011 to help maintain the culture, customs, traditions and history of the Acadians. I am extremely proud to have participated in le Forum des jeunes am-

bassadeurs de la francophonie des amériques, and I am excited to be a part of an Acadian renaissance that is revitalizing the French speaking communities of Louisiana.



Sunset on the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
New Brunswick, Canada.

Traveling: A Reflection

By Jason Shah (BAIS, 2011)

Editors' Note: Since the summer of 2010, **Jason Shah** (BAIS 2011) has backpacked to many rural villages in his native Nepal, circumnavigated the planet, traveling nearly 30,000 nautical miles and visiting 12 countries with an academic voyage called Semester-at-Sea, and logged nearly 5000 miles on a road trip across the US. In the spring of 2011, after a short return to New Orleans, he will be participating in one of UNO's exchange programs with the Berlin School of Economics and Law in Germany. In this article, Jason thinks back over the past year of travel and study abroad.

"One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things." —Henry Miller

Time has passed, but my memories linger and bring a smile to my face. Surprisingly, a mist of tears also clouds my vision, even as I feel a real a sense of satisfaction. In short, the memories of my travels trigger a strange mix of indescribable emotions.

Last year, 2010, I traveled more than I have ever traveled in my life. I had not planned this, nor did I work for a long time to save money so that I could do it. Somehow, I have been the recipient of unexpected generosity. I have also made some smart decisions along the way. From the day I found out about my Semester-at-Sea scholarship, my life has been an incredible emotional ride—ups and downs, hopes and despairs. However, as I write today, I've explored 10 new countries and returned to two others that I had previously visited. And, while doing all that, I have seen, heard, smelled, touched, and felt things that have transformed me in big ways. Here are some lessons that traveling this year has taught me:



Shah happened to pass through a wedding ceremony in Meiji Shrine, Tokyo. In this photo, Shah is with Japanese bride and groom in their traditional attire.

A deep appreciation of nature: I have always enjoyed being in nature, and this year I had a lot of opportunities to do just that. There is something about being in the wild—exploring a connection that human societies have slowly but steadily pushed out of sight and that we are now attempting to rediscover. The ruggedness of a mountain landscape, the lushness of tropical greenery, the calmness of still waters, the turbulence of high seas, and all that nature has to show us has inspired me this year. It all began with my 12-day backpack across Nepal in

the summer of 2010, and it has continued as I circumnavigated the planet with Semester-at-Sea, traversing the world's oceans. Now, I wonder why I started so late—when I lose myself in nature, I find out more about myself.

A passion for adventure sports: Coupled with my renewed admiration for nature is the desire to challenge nature and be challenged by it. When I finally ascended to 5416 meters (17,770 feet) above sea level after ten days of hiking in Nepal, the sense of achievement, the

surge of confidence, and the clarity of the moment were very profound. This desire has been a prominent part of my travels around the world: hiking mountain trails, learning how to surf, and so on. Pushing one's comfort level and maintaining one's determination, and meeting a challenge is addictive because of the adrenaline rush it produces. It feels great to set a goal, and then achieve it. Now, I am committed to adventure and extreme nature sports. Training and excelling in this arena will take time, but I am determined to achieve success.

The transformative value of Travel: When you go to any place, you become a part of its reality. The new context determines your vision and experience in that moment. When I sat down and talked with farmers about their life in Can Tho (Viet Nam), I—willingly or unwillingly—became a part of *their* world, and they became a part of *mine*. In other words, those people were the direct and indirect recipients of everything I did or said at that instant; it was no longer just me! This is the potential that lies at the heart of travel—to acknowledge and respect the shift in perspective, human relations, interpersonal dynamics, and accept the new self one becomes in that interaction.

Enormity of Humanity: It's one thing to look at photos of people from all parts of the planet, and another thing to actually meet them in their own worlds—language, culture, gestures, and emotions. Even when I just look around where I am right now, I see people walking and going about their business with their own purposes and convictions. Truly, the

pool of humanity is immense—a resource and reality that supersedes all other social realities. And most importantly, they cherish the same thing that I cherish—happiness. Whether they get a shot at it, of course, is a different matter altogether. Having shared many candid moments with people from all walks of life, I will never stop wondering at the enormous complexity of human connections. In short, I will never be able to get enough!



Kids playing in a water village near Chau Doc by the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. Shah backpacked to several rural towns during his stay in the country.

“Random” Acts of Kindness?

All my life, I have heard stories about strangers who have demonstrated extreme generosity, and I have always wondered when I would encounter such people. This year, I have been the recipient of such generosity many times, and it has affected me profoundly. My Semester-at-Sea experience was itself the result of such “random” acts of kindness. Don't get me wrong: I am not saying that everyone is altruistic, good, or selfless. Some are and some aren't. Those who aren't are people who *expect* something in return for their giving. That's not being

kind. Other people may reasonably *hope* to get something out of their generosity—the joy of assisting others, the beginning of a meaningful relationship, or simply the vicarious pleasure of being a part of someone else's adventure. After my experiences, such acts of kindness don't seem random anymore, and as I see it, kindness should not be random. I believe we should all try to help others because one never knows how a single decision can make or break a moment, a day, or the whole life of another person.

After having glimpsed the reality of the wider world at this young age, I am convinced that I will never stop. Traveling is now my passion, and it will challenge me and drive me forward in my efforts to understand human life. My travels have helped me weigh the values and goals I want to pursue, and given me a new perspective about my career and my life. Most importantly, having traveled to far off places where I didn't speak the language and having emerged from that journey with incredible experiences, I have a sense of security that I will be fine no matter what the circumstances might be. In short, I trust myself and have a new confidence about my strengths and weaknesses.

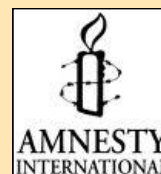
All these things factored in, my travels have affected me. I am high on *wanderlust*. And now as I look at a map, I see not only the places I've been, but also those other places I have never been and that I now long to visit. Without a doubt, learning and traveling have not stopped—instead my travels have triggered a hunger for life-long exploration.

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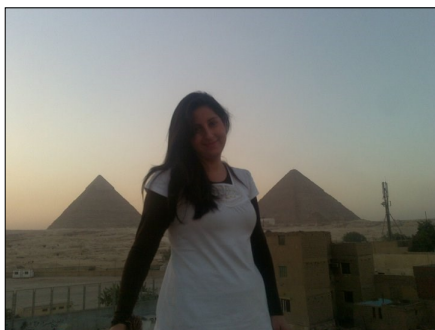


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BAIS Student's Experience in Egypt

By Rachael Rodney (BAIS 2011)



Having just returned from Egypt three months ago, I'm truly riveted by the events of the on-going revolution. My time there was divided into two main parts: the Western experience, and the Egyptian experience. For the first month, I acted the part of tourist and spent my time with Western students at school. The second and third months found me spending all of my time with local

Egyptians and living as a native.

During the first week, I stayed in a hostel downtown, near the now world-famous Tahrir Square. I loved the friendliness of the area and the sense that the downtown area never slept, but I didn't feel completely safe there. So when my Arabic classes started at the International Language Institute, I decided to move into the apartment the school reserved for students located in a nearby neighborhood. I stayed there for three weeks and made many European and American friends. We spent our free time doing things that all tourists do in Egypt: camping in the White Desert with a Bedouin tribe, riding camels and snorkeling in Dahab, visiting the pyramids and tombs at Giza, Sa-

kara, and Luxor, and even climbing to the top of Mount Sinai. Although it was very fun, most of the people I met were there for only one month and then left for their homes in distant lands.

My new apartment was literally *at* the pyramids of Giza. Contrary to my previous neighborhood, where there was a plethora of European embassies, foreign shops, and foreign people, my new neighborhood in Giza was occupied by Egyptian residents only. In fact, my two roommates and I were told that we were the only foreigners who had ever stayed there. Our building was a typical Egyptian residence; it even had an access to the rooftop with a beautiful view of the pyramids, the sphinx, and the de-

claim with happiness when they see a white faced-blond person.

I felt like I had come to a place where I could find no one like me. They were people, but somehow they didn't quite seem so to me. Of course, they had feelings, but their feelings didn't match my own. Their strange looking faces murmured unfamiliar sounds that frightened me so much I could hardly smile or initiate a word. After staring incredulously, I gathered the courage to say "*Je suis Raju. Je parle un peu francais.*" In my mind, I was thanking my French teacher who had taught me these phrases. I knew that they could easily see my embarrassment just by looking at my blushing face and hearing my stammered phrases. I then said "*Desole,*" which means "Sorry," and continued firing off French sentences one after other to dispel the stress I was feeling. To my great astonishment, they replied to me with sweet smiles, just as my fellow Nepalese would receive a *Namaste* or any Nepali word from a foreigner. My feeling that those people were different from me was instantly driven out of my mind. Their smiles are still vivid in my memory as they were the first and most important proof that these people were, in fact, not different from me.

After I entered the room, evidence of our common humanity became more and more apparent. I saw a group of small children waiting eagerly to welcome me, a few glancing furtively through the window and some hiding under the table. I could easily recognize

those little characters' activities; they reminded me of all my small cousins back in Nepal. Then I realized, no matter how we are brought up, we possess many similar traits and in fact we all are same. I was most comfortable with the children because when I was with them, I didn't have to use as many words, and I could usually communicate adequately with my facial expressions and hand signals. A ping pong board at the back of the house, with its familiar rules, made me even more comfortable. By the time evening arrived, I felt quite at ease, luxuriating in the pleasure of a fine meal with excellent French Wine. And when they eventually sent me off to be with the remark, "Good night, call us if you need something," I knew I had come a long ways from the feelings I had experienced when I first arrived.

Their requests, surprises, approvals and denials, respect, and love needed no language. They all were adorned with their expressions and I could easily answer all of them. Then I realized what the Portuguese novelist Paulo Coelho had described in his international bestseller *The Alchemist*. In that book, he talks about the language that my new French family and I all used that day—it was the "Language of the World." The language of love and friendship, the language of peace and prosperity, the language that served as a gateway to the heart, indeed the language that needs no syllables to start and no sounds to end but nonetheless has the capacity to conquer everyone's heart and soul.

I stayed up nearly half of that first night and finally realized that the problems we face in this world are not problems that arise from our nationality or our culture. My new French family wasn't different from me at all. The only differences that people from different corners of the world experience today are differences that are created in our minds. They are the result of an attitude. When I was flying across Asia and Europe, looking out of the plane's window, I couldn't see a single boundary line separating any two countries that I had often seen in the globe of my study table. I couldn't even tell which country I was flying over, even when I was above my own country. The water of the Mediterranean Sea was never unhappy when an Asian jumped into it or an African surfed on its tides. The snow-capped Pyrenees allowed me to step onto their peaks and trek up to their summits knowing that I hadn't been born there and that I was a citizen of a far away land.

In the still of that first night, I tried to understand why the peoples of the world are divided if we all can speak the *Language of the World* and we all are the Children of this World?



Rodney speaking to Basim's students

sert. The only thing between us was a stable full of horses three stories below.

What was really important about this new life, however, were the people I encountered. For two months I began each of my mornings by drinking Turkish coffee on the porch, feet propped up on the rail, enjoying the morning desert breeze. Eventually, my roommate Chris would join me and we would leave the apartment and walk slowly down the dusty street to the busy main road through Giza, often dodging tour buses, taxis, camels, and horses along the way. Grabbing breakfast en route to the bus, we could be seen eating with our left hand and holding an Arabic grammar book with our right.

After school, I would make my way back to the apartment and meet my landlord downstairs. He owned a stable which housed dozens of horses and camels whose job it was to carry tourists around the pyramids. Since I lived almost on top of his stable, he gave me my own personal horse to ride every day.



Path and village of workers in Luxor

Kastinowee was a retired race-horse and riding him was like being shot out of a cannon. I would go with one of the stable hands through the back streets of the neighborhood and into the Egyptian desert.

After riding, I would either use my evening to study, meet with some of the local Egyptian friends I made, or teach at a program called *Spread Your English* (SYE). You can learn more about SYE at their website: <http://www.facebook.com/group.phpgid=106746976024076>. My students were anywhere from 18 to 30 years old, usually college students in Cairo, and would meet twice a week. The program was run by close Egyptian friends of mine, and was designed to help Egyptians perfect their English skills by using native English speakers as teachers. Of all the experiences I had in Egypt,

teaching at SYE was by far the most life changing of all. Not only did I realize a new found love of teaching, I was also able to fully engage these Egyptians in tough cultural discussions about all sorts of subjects, including politics and religion. This is where I first learned of their unanimous desire to oust Mubarak from office and move forward with a more democratic form of government. It was a complete certainty, for Egyptians and foreigners alike, that he would leave office in the fall. Little did anyone of us know, however, that my friends and students would soon be taking matters into their own hands with a revolution!

If you are interested in getting advice about traveling to Egypt or about the programs in which I participated, send me an email at rodney1@cox.net.

Congratulations!

The University of New Orleans National Model United Nations delegation will be representing Honduras at the National Model United Nations Conference in New York City.

Delegation members: Raju Adhikari, Ashley Burns, Tara Cartner, Ivy Kroll, Brodie Leblue, Sara Ormes, Manish Sapkota, Markus Muller, Katrena Porter, Kevin Potter, James Smith, Tanja Supranowitz, Bo Tucker

Please help support the National Model United Nations Club by donating! Checks may be made payable to "UNO Model UN Club" and sent to John Hazlett, Dept. of English, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148.

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- ⇒Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce, N.O.
- ⇒World Trade Center, N.O.
- ⇒Sierra Tarahumara Foundation, Chihuahua, Mexico
- ⇒Woodrow Wilson Foundation for International Scholars, Washington, DC
- ⇒Mayor's International Office, N.O.
- ⇒World Affairs Council, N.O.
- ⇒The U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC
- ⇒The Washington Center's DC to London Internship
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- ⇒Project Hope, Palestine
- ⇒New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council
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REMINDER!

If you are taking French or Spanish as your second language, you can easily obtain a minor without surpassing your 120 hours.

Take both literature requirements in the target language and add one 3000-level or higher French/Spanish course to your electives. Voila!

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&
MARGO SULLIVAN

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